LD 28; I Cor. 10:14-17; II Cor. 11: 17-34; The Lord’s Supper as a Sacrament I. The Recipients of this Supper II. The Instrument of Nourishment III. The Consequence of this Meal

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, how many times do you eat a day? Well, most adults eat 3 times a day- but our children likely eat more often than that! Eating, just like washing, is a normal part of our daily activity. But it was not always this way. Food insecurity, famine and drought were a common part of our forefather’s lives. Even today, there are some who face hunger on a daily basis. But here in North America, we have more food than we know what to do with. Added to this, we often eat all by ourselves. Where meals used to be a time of both thanksgiving and fellowship with the entire family, today most meals are eaten in silence as each member of the house sits alone with their personalized entertainment. In order for us to understand the significance of the Lord’s Supper as a meal, we have to go back to the basics. The Lord’s Supper is a fellowship meal shared by Christ and it is for His people! So today we consider this theme: Jesus Christ invites His people to partake of the Lord’s Supper as a heavenly meal for our souls.

**I. The Recipients of this Supper**

In our first point we consider the recipients of this supper. Who is that needs to eat? Well, those who are hungry! But who is hungry? And the answer should be, everyone is, by nature, hungry. Here again, we remember that we are speaking of spiritual things. The hunger that we experience is not an earthly hunger- not a pain in our bellies when we have not had anything to eat- but rather a pain in our souls because we are famished. Our souls are dying of hunger- we desperately need something to eat. In Ex. 16 as the Israelites were leaving the Red Sea, the people began to grumble and complain. You see, in Egypt they had food security. There was no food shortage- they had melons and meat to fill their pots and satisfy their bellies. But where would food be found in the desert? Where would sustenance be found now that they were in the wilderness? The answer to this question would come in the form of heavenly bread- manna! The Israelites needed to see their hunger- they need to see their need- and this need would be supplied only as they looked to the hand of God. So God graciously provided heavenly manna- he rained bread on them from on high. But this manna- this bread from heaven- was designed to teach the Israelites as spiritual truth. As I Cor. 10: 3 puts it, they all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink. The food and drink provided in the wilderness were means to an end- they were designed to teach them and us about a deeper need! You see, spiritually we cannot feed ourselves. We are spiritually wasting away- our souls need nourishment! Not only do we need spiritual new life as we saw with our baptism, we need spiritual sustenance in this new life! But more specifically, who is it that is invited to this supper? Who does the invitation go out to? Well, the Lord’s Supper is a covenant meal. Just as the nations did not receive the gift of manna from heaven- so it is that the Lord’s Supper is designed for God’s people. As we read in QA 75- Christ commanded me and all believers to come, eat and drink. So it is a command that Jesus gives us- to come, take and eat! The invitation is a privilege and a responsibility. God’s people may and must come! We are to respond to this call with a heart of faith. Here a word of caution must be said. This is a meal for the covenant people of God who by faith respond to this invitation. There is a warning that we read of in I Cor. 11:27- be careful that you do not partake in an unworthy manner. Those who come need to be sober minded- they need to be old enough for self-reflection. Those who come are to understand and answer in their hearts this question- do I know my sin, and have I come to trust in Christ alone for my salvation? Stated negatively, those who refuse to repent and believe are warned not to come. Anyone who comes without this necessary faith are trampling on the body and blood of Jesus. They are said to be guilty of the body and blood. Their condemnation will be greater because they took something that they had no right to receive! This is a meal for God’s people- those who have a living and active faith! So those who are invited are bid to come in a proper way. With understanding- coming with God’s people- remembering and believing. But do not think that your access to this table is something that you have earned. Stated clearly, our invitation to come is not based on our work or merit. Yes, we need faith. But sitting at the table is not a work but rather our sitting here to partake is rooted in the finished and complete work of Christ. Interestingly, this sacrament is called the Lord’s Supper. It is not called the Lord’s Breakfast or Dinner- but the Lord’s Supper. Traditionally, Supper was the last meal of the day shared by a family after the work was finished. It was a meal of rest and fellowship. Although the Passover meal was celebrated in haste and preparation- they ate with their sandals on- ready to leave Egypt at a moment’s notice. We celebrate the Lord’s Supper in peace and rest- Enjoying the communion and deliverance Christ has already secured for us! In other words, the work of the day is done! We are already home! Now we are enjoying the benefits! The Lord’s Supper is the beginning of the meal which we will enjoy for all eternity! So it is the needy who are to come- but those who are also thankful for this very food as well!

**II. The Instrument of Nourishment**

Next, then, we consider the instrument of nourishment. If the LS is designed to a meal of nourishment for God’s people, what exactly is this food that sustains? Well, bread and wine are the elements that are presented to us for our partaking. But as it was with the water of baptism, bread and wine remain the signs of this sacrament. Bread and wine taken by the hand and inserted into the mouth have a temporary and passing benefit. The focus is not on feeding the earthly body here. We have homes to eat normal food in. That was, in fact, the main accusation in I Cor. 11:22- don’t you have homes to eat and drink in? To view the LS as an earthly meal by which to feed your bellies is to miss the point! Rather, the sign of this sacrament is pointing to the body and blood of Jesus. As QA 75 states- Jesus body broken and His blood poured out for me. Here to we see the connection made to baptism in QA 78- the water of baptism pointed to a fountain of blood that poured forth from Jesus side. So the one sacrifice of Jesus made on the cross is clearly the focus of both sacraments. The body and blood of Jesus are presented in this sacrament as the food and drink by which our souls can be fed and nourished. Like the earthly manna pointed to the bread of life, so the earthly bread and wine point to the Son of God who gave up His life for us. This is what nourishes us- the body and blood of Jesus! His body is real food for our souls- His blood real drink for our spirits! So to be clear, the nourishment is not physical but spiritual. The elements of nourishment are His body and blood. And the manner in which we partake is that by faith. It is not our earthly mouth that receives these benefits- rather the mouth of faith. The instrument of feeding is heart that believes. QA 76 put is like this- we eat and drink of Christ as we accept Him with a believing heart. We are to take, eat, remember and believe! Not only is this meal offered, but it is also to be partaken of! Participated in! Perhaps I can illustrate this point. When someone offers you the right hand of fellowship- you need to extend your own hand to receive it! When someone you love gives you a hug- you need to open your own arms to receive it. One sided hugs show a cold, hard heart! There is a lack of union and communion if this display of friendship is rejected! So it is in the Lord’s Supper, we are to respond to this offer and participate in it! As we receive this invite; we are to believe, accept and partake rightly!

**III. The Consequence of this Meal**

And when we receive this meal rightly, we are assured that we will be fed. So in our final point, we consider the consequence of this meal. What is the benefit- what is the promised end and outcome when this meal is celebrated rightly? Well, as a means of grace we are assured that the host will give us what He has promised. QA 75 outlines these promises. First, the body and blood of Jesus are surely offered to me. Second, His body and blood will surely nourish and refresh my soul for eternal life. In other words, the consequence of this meal is this; those who partake of this supper by faith are surely fed! Just as surely as you can see and hold the bread- as you taste and see the wine- so surely was Jesus offered for you! And as your body is fed with earthly food- so surely does the one sacrifice of Jesus nourish your soul! Here again we see that the Lord’s Supper is designed to strengthen our faith! It’s very presence has the purpose of calming our fears. Do you see this food and drink before you? Well, do you know the purpose of this food and drink? Just as your body is fed by bread and wine- so surely- just as certain is the nourishment your soul receives in Christ! When we come together for the Lord’s Supper, we are called to and seated at the table by our Lord. Jesus is the host of this supper. And the meal He provides is His very own body and blood. By faith we partake of Him- are fed by Him! As QA 76 puts it, we are united more and more to Christ blessed body! Or as we read in I Cor. 10:16, this meal is a participation in the body of Christ! So by faith, when we come to this sacred meal, we are coming closer to Him! Getting to know Him and His work better! Growing in our love and dependance on Him! But there is a second consequence as well. Not only are we united to Christ body as His very people- we are also united to His body with His very people. As a communion meal- we commune with Him and with His people. So the second consequence is a growing love for the fellowship. We are built up as a body! The Lord’s Supper breaks down the walls of division. As I Cor. 11:18 puts it, we are all participants in the altar. We who are many are one body in Him! So church union and the fellowship of the saints is a second consequence to this celebration! We love and grow in our desire to serve within this particular body of believers. Yet there is one more consequence as we find in I Cor. 11:26- when we eat and drink; we proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes. There is a gospel proclamation that takes place- we proclaim His death to the watching world! The Lord’s Supper is a message proclaimed to the world! There is someone who died for sins- and that you too can be forgiven! But this message of forgiveness has a time restraint on it. As I Cor. 11:26 concludes, until He comes again! We celebrate the LS in the hope of His return- and in preparation for that return! The host of this meal will come back to gather His bride and make us one! So we celebrate this sacred meal in the hope of a future, greater meal. On this side of glory we celebrate with the church militant and with bread and wine. On the other side of glory we will celebrate the marriage supper of the Lamb with the church triumphant! So the meal we have here below prepares us and whets our appetite for the great and lasting feast that is to come!

To conclude, the original context of the Lord’s Supper was one of intimate fellowship. One shared, communal cup from which His people drank. One loaf of bread that was broken and distributed. This communal act of fellowship highlights the union that we have with Christ and with one another! Jesus Christ invites His people to partake of the Lord’s Supper as a heavenly meal for our souls. So come when the feast is spread- come, take and eat by faith! For the body of Jesus broken and His blood shed for the complete forgiveness of all your sins!