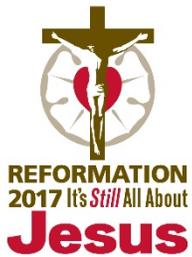


The Sacrament of the Altar: God Delivers the Goods of the Cross

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When I order a book on Amazon, I own that book. It's mine but it isn't doing me a lot of good sitting there in the warehouse. Instead I need that book delivered to me. That's when it goes from me simply owning it as an abstract truth to actually possessing the book in a real, personal way. It's also the first time I'm able to take advantage of owning my book—I can finally read it.

These same advantages are ours in the Lord's Supper (along with the other Means of Grace) because it delivers the goods, the blessings of the cross, to us. In the Sacrament, we receive Christ's very body and blood that was given and shed on the cross for us for the forgiveness of our sins.

Luther says that in that one blessing, "forgiveness of sins" is also found all of God's blessings, for, as Luther says, "Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation" (SC 6.6).

This is only the beginning though. Where there is forgiveness of sins, there's not only life and salvation, but also peace, joy, hope, faith, love and so much more. Every good thing that God would give us is ours because of Christ's death on the cross (Ap 4.90-101). And in the Sacrament all of that is delivered to you, put on your very lips, and comes into your body.

What a comfort this is. The amazing goodness of the cross of Christ is not something that I have to grasp or latch onto myself. I don't have to find my way through time and space to the cross through some mysterious, ill-defined method. Instead God brings it to me and I may be certain that it is mine because I ate Christ's given body and drank Christ's shed blood (AC 5.1-3).

My daughter, Elinor, always asks to smell my wife's breath after Communion (which is something I did as child, too). She always asks, "Can I smell Jesus' blood." It's a beautiful confession from a young mouth about what the Lord's Supper is all about. To smell the wine is to smell the blood of the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29). To smell it is to smell God's mercy and forgiveness and salvation. In the Lord's Supper I am forgiven. You are forgiven. It is delivered. It is certain!

Further reading

AC 10, 13, 22, 24; Ap 13, 24; SA 2.2; SC 6; LC 6; Ep 7; SD 7

Abbreviations

AC = Unaltered Augsburg Confession
Ap = Apology of the Augsburg Confession
SC = Small Catechism
LC = Large Catechism
SA = Smalcald Articles (exclusive of the Tractate)
Tr = Tractate on the Power and Primacy of the Pope
Ep = The Formula of Concord, Epitome
SD = The Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration

Cat = Catalogue of Testimonies

NOTE: Articles and sections/paragraphs in the *Book of Concord* are denoted in Arabic numerals, separated by a period. Please note that the first number in citations of SC and LC points to the Chief Part; any numbers following the period point to the specific section/paragraph. Thus SC 1.8 does not point to the 8th Commandment, but to the explanation of the 4th.