

MAUNDY THURSDAY – 2008

Psalm 34: 8

Our Lord Jesus is good and His Supper is one strong evidence for that. Jesus is good only and absolutely. When He gives us anything, it is good and is intended for our good. This is true even of things that may, at the time, for the present, seem bad!

When it comes to Holy Communion, however, the Supper must surely even seem good to everyone who believes what our Savior tells us about it.

This Old Testament Psalm verse does not tell us only about the Lord's Supper. Obviously, when David wrote this, the Lord's Supper was still one thousand years in the future. It was given when God had kept all His promises about sending a Savior for mankind, to rescue them from the calamity which they brought on themselves at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

But, because of what Jesus says the Sacrament is, namely His Last Will and Testament, when He bequeaths to every believer His rich and precious gifts, the Supper is certainly an application of this verse.

“Taste and See that the Lord Is Good!”

Our Lord and Savior is good in redeeming us. The last verse of Psalm 34 says, “The LORD redeemed His servants.” Indeed, our merciful, compassionate, and gracious God makes people into His servants by means of His redeeming them. When Jesus offered the Apostles this holy meal the first time, He was within less than twenty-four hours of completing the payment for freeing us. That is what redemption is, the paying of a ransom to free us. In this case, it is the most important freedom. It is freedom from that deadly disobedience of sin. It is freedom from Satan's kidnapping us. And the price for doing that was the eternal, almighty, holy life of God poured out for the sins of the whole world on the cross of Christ.

When David wrote to taste and see the goodness of the Lord, he was certainly inviting everyone to personally experience this goodness by faith, trusting all such promises of God. But in the case of the Holy Supper, our Redeemer has actually made it possible for us literally to taste and to see that goodness. As we taste the bread – really joined with His actual body – and when we taste the wine – really joined with His actual blood – we also get to taste, by faith, the forgiveness He promises with the words ‘covenant’ (testament) and ‘for the forgiveness of sins’. Yes, and we get, in a sense, to see the Lord's goodness as we see the bread and wine, and even to smell that goodness as we smell the wine.

Jesus is the Redeemer. The LORD – I AM – is the Redeemer. Jesus is that I AM.

He is good also in justifying us. That is a word the Apostle Paul likes to use. In the Bible ‘justify’ means ‘declare not guilty’, ‘declare innocent’. All evidence points to our guilt. Goodness!, even we can see plenty of evidence for our sinfulness. Imagine what God sees when He looks at us sinners. Why, He sees holy people, saints. The very next verse after our verse, “Taste and see that the LORD is good, blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him,” begins “Fear the LORD, you His saints.” The LORD Himself made us His saints, His holy ones. Again He did that on the basis of His purchasing our freedom from the guilt and condemning of our sin.

Jesus died as punishment. It was no accident or matter of chance that our Savior, God the Son, suffered and died on a cross, an instrument of execution for serious evil doers. The other two men deserved getting crucified. One of them said so! Well, the One

in the center deserved it, too, but in an entirely different way. He voluntarily had His Father transfer everybody else's sin together with its guilt and its eternal punishment to Him. There never could have been anyone as weighted down with sin as Jesus on His cross. Jesus died for the full wages of sin.

With the sin, guilt, and punishment of all of us on Jesus, it is not on us, when we rely on Him. Justification is another word for forgiveness but justification also includes the holy perfection of Jesus credited to us.

Again the Gospel gift of forgiveness, our Savior's righteousness, is in Holy Communion because Jesus put it there.

In fact, this shows us in yet another way that God our Savior is good. He offers each one of us personally all these Gospel blessings in the Sacrament of the Altar. Christ has already prepared the meal. He created the bread and wine. He united the very body He took to the cross and the very blood that trickled from His wounds to that bread and wine for His Christians to eat and to drink. He earned the forgiveness which He promises to give us in the Supper. When a person eats and drinks he/she eats and drinks bread and wine, body and blood. When anyone believes the promise of forgiveness, he has it, full and free, from Jesus.

He offers the same forgiveness for faith and to faith in His promise in Baptism, too. He offers the same forgiveness for faith and to faith in the Gospel message written, too. It is the same Gospel offered and given by these different tools He has given us. We say, 'the Gospel in Word and Sacraments'.

Jesus paid for our forgiveness (redemption). He forgives us based on His payment (justification). He delivers these accomplishments to us by the Gospel, the Good News.

And He even uses the Gospel to bring His creating power to us to give us the gift of faith. This Psalm says even lions can get weak and hungry. I guarantee that anyone who imagines that he is a spiritual lion will go hungry and be weak to the extent of total starvation. We are not strong in ourselves.

Faith is not a self-produced thing. Faith is a matter of grace, God's gift. The Bible does not say we are saved by grace except for faith which you need to come up with on your own, or with just a little help from God. "We are saved by grace; through faith, and that not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast."

The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Jesus' Gospel of forgiveness, life, and salvation (which faith believes) is what creates the faith to believe. The Supper is one form of the Gospel. It encourages and strengthens the very trust that then receives everything Jesus promises in the Supper. Your soul is fed in Holy Communion. New life is maintained. Eternal life is given by faith. Our Savior is good and the Meal He has given His people proves it. Taste and see that the LORD is good. Amen.