

# IN DEPTH BIBLE STUDY: SPIRITUALITY OF THE CROSS

## CLASS 10 and POWER POINT 10:

### THE SACRAMENTS: HOLY COMMUNION:

1. In LS, we don't seek God, He seeks us, we do not love Him, He loves us. It is God, not us who acts, see the parable of the Lost Sheep, Luke 15:4-7. 1 John 4:10, we don't love God, He loves us. Frances Thompson's poem, "The Hounds of Heaven," we run from God, He tracks us, we don't ascend to God, God descends to us. Christians are called to 'act' in the world, but in our relationship with God, all hinges on His actions.
2. This action is OBJECTIVE. God comes to us from the outside. Christ and the Holy Spirit dwells in us and this is much more than a mere function of our psychological state, or inward selves. LS never tells anyone to look inward if someone is doubting or struggling, because we only see our sinful selves, but to look to something objective and tangible; "The Cross, to God's Word, and the immutable promises of God!"
3. These concrete promises of God that apply to me being saved, aren't established by the vagaries of memories, decisions or sensations or having been elected or not, but in a tangible, historic event. When our sins oppress us, Luther reminds us that "We have been baptized." Being B,I have the promise of salvation and have eternal life in body and soul!
4. God works through material reality. The word "spiritual," is the opposite of "material," so many assume it's the escape from the material world as it opposes all things material. In Eastern religions this is the case. In Hindu, the material world is an illusion spun by a demon and to be saved means to escape this bondage of senses and attachments to the body. Christianity by contrast, affirms the religious significance of the physical.
5. In the 1<sup>st</sup> Article of the Apostles' Creed, is the doctrine of creation that God made all things "good." The 2<sup>nd</sup> article is the doctrine of incarnation. It affirms the physical, God became incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man. In Christ, "The Word became flesh!" John 1:14. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> Article we find that the Holy Spirit manifests Himself in the communion of saints/the church and the 'resurrection of the dead.'
6. The means of grace, Word and Sacrament are material things. The mundane acts like attending worship and going to work are charged with spiritual significance. The means of grace are "Evangelical," the Holy Spirit works through these to create faith. They bring forgiveness. They are not like a talisman to make the rain fall or our businesses to boom. They communicate grace, unmerited favor from God that grants eternal life.
7. In HC, God acts objectively bringing forgiveness, and what makes these promises effective is the real presence of Jesus Christ. This is an astonishing claim one in which many Christians draw back from and one in which is the heart of Lutheran Evangelicalism. The Bible says that Jesus gave the meal saying, "This is my body for you," Then, "This is my blood poured out for you, do this in remembrance of me." (Matt. 26 and Luke 22). Surely the Bible means that the body and blood are symbolized. No Lutherans don't interpret or explain away what God's Word says.

8. There are other passages that indicate the extraordinary in HC. St. Paul warns that, "Whoever takes the body and blood unworthily is sinning against the body and blood of the Lord." We are told to examine ourselves as one can drink judgment on themselves. (1 Cor. 4:27-29). These words do not sound symbolic, the body and blood ARE there! They're present in power and must be recognized. L high view of the Sacraments come from their high view of The Bible.
9. Christ is really present. Many people go searching, hoping to find and meet Jesus, but there He is in His body and blood. Some say they could believe if Jesus would only appear to them. And here He is! Christ is present at the altar, and He gives Himself to us! As we eat His bread, we receive in a personal way His body offered on the cross. We sip the wine and we receive His blood sealing the forgiveness of sins. In these are literally UNITED to Christ. The gap between us, Golgotha and eternity are bridged!
10. It has been said this unity with Christ is more intimate than what the very disciples had enjoyed face to face with Jesus. Christ comes to us, it's not what we do, but something Christ does, we only receive. HC is nothing more than G! The most significant words in HC are as Luther points out, "Given for you!" The one who receives the bread and wine, hears that Christ body and blood are offered, "FOR YOU!"
11. There is nothing vague here. We don't have to worry about our 'decision' for Jesus or if we have been elected or sinful or saved. In HC, Christ gives Himself to me! All of His promises are now tangible. In the HC, we touch the Risen Christ like His disciples. As God's Word rings in my ears, it tells me that His body and blood are for me! I'm forgiven assured of God's forgiveness.
12. When EV first went to a L Church, he was mesmerized by what the Pastor was saying to those at the Communion rail. We couldn't go until we have been thoroughly instructed. We needed to become an actual member of this community that is so intimate that fellowship is established by eating and drinking. So EV watched, he heard the word for the teenager, the mother of the baby and the lady in the wheel chair, "Given for you," and over and over again, "Given for you!"
13. It seems the shuffling of those attending communion go up and back from the rail may have been a routine. Other times EV saw the seraphic expression on their faces. God routinely feeds His people with Himself and it is His action even with our blindness and/or our dull insensibility does not take anything away from His gift.
14. At times EV takes the HC for granted, there are other times that he is overwhelmed by Christ's real presence. EV said his first communion was like his B. The wafer was light, but needed chewed, "This is the true body of the Lord," said the Pastor. The wine surprised him by its sharpness, the sour and sweet taste according to the words I was hearing, "This is the true blood of our Lord and Savior," was tangible.
15. Without food we starve, we must fuel our physical life, otherwise we go weak and fade away. The food for our body comes from the death of living things. Whether we fuel ourselves with a steak or ripped plants in a veggie casserole, the can be no physical life w/o the death of other life. What is true for the physical is true for the spiritual, we can only live if there is sacrifice, we can only live with nourishment.
16. The G converts us and nourishes us, we need to receive Christ over and over again. In LS, HC is a means of grace. They are tangible, material means used by God to convey the G, that converts, feeds and is actually present in the Church!