

**Holy Week.**

“You see, therefore, that what we call the mass is a promise of the forgiveness of sins made to us by God, and such a promise as has been confirmed by the death of the Son of God. For the only differences between a promise and a testament is that the testament involves the death of the one who makes it. A testator is a promiser who is about to die, while a promiser (if I may put it thus) is a testator who is not about to die. This testament of Christ is foreshadowed in all the promises of God from the beginning of the world; indeed, whatever value those ancient promises possessed was altogether derived from this new promise that was to come in Christ. Hence the words ‘compact,’ ‘covenant,’ and ‘testament of the Lord’ occur so frequently in the Scriptures. These words signified that God would one day die. ‘For where there is a testament, the death of the testator must of necessity occur’ (Heb. 9[:16]). Now God made a testament, therefore, it was necessary that he should die. But God could not die unless he became man. Thus the incarnation and the death of Christ are both comprehended most concisely in this one word, ‘testament.’” **Martin Luther**, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 36, p. 38, underscore added.

**Crucifixion**

(***Albrecht Durer***,

***Large Passion***)

**The Festival of Maundy Thursday**,

**9 April 2020**,

*Concordia Lutheran Mission,*

Terrebonne, Oregon.

**“The Saving Gospel is**

**the Forgiveness of Sin of the New Testament.”**

After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me.

**I Corinthians 11:25.**

**Introduction**.

*The Lord delivers right to each man personally in his hands in the Cup of the Holy Communion what he needs the most: the New Testament*. Christ says, “This cup is the new testament in my blood ... .” Here God Himself gives to you His Last Will and Testament.[[1]](#footnote-1)1 That Last Will and Testament is the most important Gift ever: Christ bequeaths to men the Forgiveness of sins. From the forgiveness of sins comes Salvation and Life Everlasting.

Testament means God must die.[[2]](#footnote-2)2 God cannot in and of Himself die, but now that God has become man, then, God can, indeed, and did die.[[3]](#footnote-3)3 This Death He suffered in order to Atone for the sins of men and save them through that Forgiveness of His Passion. That Forgiveness of sins through His Passion is God’s Last Will and Testament to men.

As we’ve seen this Blessed Testament of God comes to men through the Gospel, namely, God’s Word and Sacraments.[[4]](#footnote-4)4 Through God’s Word and Sacraments God Himself bequeaths to men the Forgiveness of sins that saves and gives life everlasting.

The Saving Gospel is the Forgiveness of sins of the New Testament, which is the Last Will and Testament of the Son of God, that forgives sins, saves, and gives life everlasting

**I. The New Testament is the Forgiveness of Sins through the Passion of Christ.**

**A. The New Testament is the Forgiveness of sins.**

We must remember that when Jesus says, “This Cup is the New Testament” that the New Testament is the Forgiveness of sins for Christ’s Sake. This Blessed Fact of the New Testament and the Forgiveness of sins in the Passion of Christ is the fulfillment of prophecy.[[5]](#footnote-5)5 The prophet Jeremiah writes of the New Testament and the Forgiveness of sins:

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts[[6]](#footnote-6)6; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more.[[7]](#footnote-7)7

The New Testament is, as prophecy foretold, the Forgiveness of sins.

**B. The Forgiveness of sins comes through the Passion of Christ.**

Who but God can forgive sins? Indeed, Forgiveness of sins does rest with God alone because only God could pay for or atone for sins. The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard writes:

Miserable man had angered the infinite God with his sin; therefore, he fell into an infinite evil. Such an infinite evil could be paid for and removed in no in no other way than with the infinite Good. Now then, apart from God nothing is infinitely good. That’s why God became man, so that man be enabled to pay on the strength of the infinite divinity, so that this divine payment avail for the benefit of man on account of the personal union, and so that divine righteousness adequately accomplish this. This is the wondrous accomplishment of divine righteousness and mercy.[[8]](#footnote-8)8

Because the wages of sins is death[[9]](#footnote-9)9, and atonement would be made through suffering death, we see that it is God Himself who has made a testament. This Blessed Testament also shows us that God, indeed, has become man. For God could not make a Testament had He not become man. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.1[[10]](#footnote-10)0

Luther writes of the Last Will and Testament of God:

You see, therefore, that what we call the mass1[[11]](#footnote-11)1 is a promise of the forgiveness of sins made to us by God, and such a promise as has been confirmed by the death of the Son of God. For the only differences between a promise and a testament is that the testament involves the death of the one who makes it. A testator is a promiser who is about to die, while a promiser (if I may put it thus) is a testator who is not about to die. This testament of Christ is foreshadowed in all the promises of God from the beginning of the world; indeed, whatever value those ancient promises possessed was altogether derived from this new promise that was to come in Christ. Hence the words “compact,” “covenant,” and “testament of the Lord” occur so frequently in the Scriptures.1[[12]](#footnote-12)2 These words signified that God would one day die. “For where there is a testament, the death of the testator must of necessity occur” (Heb. 9[:16]). Now God made a testament, therefore, it was necessary that he should die. But God could not die unless he became man.1[[13]](#footnote-13)3 Thus the incarnation and the death of Christ are both comprehended most concisely in this one word, “testament.”1[[14]](#footnote-14)4

The Forgiveness of sins comes is the New Testament and comes through the Passion of Christ.

**II. The Gospel is the New Testament and Bequeaths to Men Personally the Saving Forgiveness of Sins.**

**A. The Holy Communion is the New Testament, namely, the Gospel.**

This Blessed Bequeathment would seem to be too good to be true. Because doubt certainly arises regarding such Good News, Jesus seals the Forgiveness of sins in the Sacrament with His Precious Body and Blood convince us He is in earnest in order to strengthen our faith.1[[15]](#footnote-15)5 Jesus says in His Last Will and Testament that we hold the New Testament in our hands in the Holy Communion. The Apostle St. Paul writes in today’s Epistle:

After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me.1[[16]](#footnote-16)6

*In the Holy Communion we also see that God places right in our hands the New Testament, namely, the Forgiveness of sins, which is the Gospel*. Here we see dramatically in the Holy Communion what the Lord means by the Gospel. *He means that He places the Saving Forgiveness of sins right in our hands*. The Lord doesn’t mean by the Gospel merely the Forgiveness of sins. *The Lord means by the Gospel the Forgiveness of sins delivered right to us personally*.1[[17]](#footnote-17)7 The Lutheran Church confesses that the Lord delivers to us personally the Forgiveness of His Passion through the Gospel, i.e., God’s Word and Sacraments:

Therefore every Christian has enough in Baptism to learn and to practise all his life; for he has always enough to do to believe firmly what it promises and brings: victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, the grace of God, the entire Christ, and the Holy Ghost with His gifts. In short, it is so transcendent that if timid nature could realize it, it might well doubt whether it could be true. For consider, if there were somewhere a physician who understood the art of saving men from dying, or, even though they died, of restoring them speedily to life, so that they would thereafter live forever, how the world would pour in money like snow and rain, so that because of the throng of the rich no one could find access! But here in Baptism there is brought free to every one’s door such a treasure and medicine as utterly destroys death and preserves all men alive.1[[18]](#footnote-18)8

The Gospel is the Cup a Christian holds in his hands because the Cup of the Sacrament of the Holy Communion is the New Testament, namely, the Forgiveness of all sins for Christ’s Sake.

**B. The Gospel Blesses men with all the Treasures of Heaven.**

Because the Gospel Forgive sins freely for Christ’s Sake, the Gospel, i.e., the Cup of the New Testament which we hold in our hands every Sunday, bestows upon men the riches of Heaven. The Lutheran Church confesses:

For here [in the Sacrament of Holy Communion] He offers to us the entire treasure which He has brought for us from heaven, and to which He invites us also in other places with the greatest kindness, as when He says in St. Matthew 11, 28: *Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*. Now it is surely a sin and a shame that He so cordially and faithfully summons and exhorts us to our highest and greatest good, and we act so distantly with regard to it, and permit so long a time to pass [without partaking of the Sacrament] that we grow quite cold and hardened, so that we have no inclination or love for it. We must never regard the Sacrament as something injurious from which we had better flee, but as a pure, wholesome, comforting remedy imparting salvation and comfort, which will cure you and give you life both in soul and body. For where the soul has recovered, the body also is relieved. Why, then, is it that we act as if it were a poison, the eating of which would bring death?1[[19]](#footnote-19)9

**Conclusion**.

*The Lord delivers right to each man personally in the Cup of the Holy Communion what he needs the most: the New Testament*. Christ says, “This cup is the new testament in my blood ... .” Here God Himself gives to you His Last Will and Testament in this Cup, which is the Gospel, namely, the Forgiveness of sins.

That Last Will and Testament of the Son of God is the most important Gift ever: Christ bequeaths to men the Forgiveness of sins. From the forgiveness of sins comes salvation, life everlasting, and all the treasures of Heaven.

**Amen.**

1. 1“**The words of the Lord’s Supper are not to be treated in a light or frivolous way, but with great reverence and respect and in the fear of the Lord, because they are the words of the last will and testament of the Son of God.** ... In the second place, when the last will and testament of a man has been executed, we are required under the law to observe the words with special care so that nothing be done which is either beside or contrary to the final will of the testator. Even the civil laws regard such a will as so sacred that they have determined that those who have made any profit at all from the will for themselves shall be deprived of it, and their inheritance through the provision of the laws themselves shall be taken away from them as being unworthy, on the grounds that they have departed from the will of the testator as it is stipulated in the words of the testament. Now, because the Son of God in His last will and testament has not permitted His heirs the liberty of believing or doing whatever seems good to them, but has willed that we believe what he has spoken in His words of institution and do what He has commanded, therefore we should give very careful thought that we do not thrust anything upon these words of the last will and testament of the Son of God, lest we deprive ourselves of the benefit of eternal happiness conveyed to us by His will or our inheritance itself be taken from us as being unworthy because we have departed from the will of the Testator as it has been given to us in the words of His last testament. There is no doubt that all too many will come under this judgment, sad to say, because of their shameful contentiousness.” Martin Chemnitz, ain *The Lord’s Supper*, tr. J. A. O. Preus, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, pp. 27, 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2“You see, therefore, that what we call the mass is a promise of the forgiveness of sins made to us by God, and such a promise as has been confirmed by the death of the Son of God. For the only differences between a promise and a testament is that the testament involves the death of the one who makes it. A testator is a promiser who is about to die, while a promiser (if I may put it thus) is a testator who is not about to die. This testament of Christ is foreshadowed in all the promises of God from the beginning of the world; indeed, whatever value those ancient promises possessed was altogether derived from this new promise that was to come in Christ. Hence the words ‘compact,’ ‘covenant,’ and ‘testament of the Lord’ occur so frequently in the Scriptures. These words signified that God would one day die. ‘For where there is a testament, the death of the testator must of necessity occur’ (Heb. 9[:16]). Now God made a testament, therefore, it was necessary that he should die. But God could not die unless he became man. Thus the incarnation and the death of Christ are both comprehended most concisely in this one word, “testament.” Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works,* Vol. 36, p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 3“*We Christians must know that if God is not also in the balance, and gives the weight, we sink to the bottom with our scale. By this I mean: If it were not to be said [if these things were not true], God has died for us, but only a man, we would be lost. But if ‘God’s death’ and ‘God died’ lie in the scale of the balance, then He sinks down, and we rise up as a light, empty scale. But indeed He can also rise again or leap out of the scale; yet He could not sit in the scale unless He became a man like us, so that it could be said: ‘God died,’ ‘God’s passion,’ ‘God’s blood,’ ‘God’s death.’ For in His nature God cannot die; but now that God and man are united in one person, it is correctly called God’s death, when the man dies who is one thing or one person with God.*” The Formula of Concord, **Thorough Declaration**, **Article VIII. Of the Person of Christ.**44, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 4God’s Word and Sacraments are the Gospel. “But let us speak of the word *liturgy*. This word does not properly signify a sacrifice, but rather the public ministry, and agrees aptly with our belief, namely, that one minister who consecrates tenders the body and blood of the Lord to the rest of the people, just as one minister who preaches tenders the Gospel to the people, as Paul says, I Cor. 4, 1: *Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God, i.e.* of the Gospel and the Sacraments. And 2 Cor. 5, 20: *We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in God’s stead, be ye reconciled to God*. Thus the term *leitourgia* agrees aptly with the ministry.” The Apology of the Augsburg Confession*,* **Article XXIV. (XII.): Of the Mass**, *Of the Term Mass*.80, 81, *Triglotta*, p. 411. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 5“This is the greatest power and the proof of the Gospel, that it has the witness of the old Law and the Prophets that it would be so in the future. For the Gospel proclaims only what prophecy has said it would proclaim, so that we may say that it has been ordained by God's previous decision to be so before it should happen, and thus God alone should receive the glory for this doctrine and not our own merits and endeavors, obviously because this Gospel was ordained before we existed, as itself says (Prov. 8:23) ‘Ages ago I was set up, at the first,’ that is, in the form of the Law, ‘before the beginning of the earth,’ that is, the church, which was of course created by it [wisdom]. For the Gospel, which is the wisdom and the power of God (1 Cor. 1:24), has established the church and does everything that wisdom in that passage says about itself or its own glory and praise.” Lectures on Romans, Glosses and Scholia in Luther's Works, American Edition, ed. Hilton C. Oswald, tr. Walter G. Tillmanns, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972) Vol. 25, pp. 144-146. Indeed, if Holy Scripture says the Church will expand through the Gospel and the Sacraments, what does this do to the notion of “new ideas” and “change” in order to meet so-called contemporary needs? [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 6In other words, the New Testament is nothing but the Word and the Sacraments and faith, which faith is created by God’s Word and Sacraments (the Marks of the Church); which faith receives God’s commandments and through this faith God inscribes upon the heart of man His commandments. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 7**Jeremiah 31:31-34**, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 8The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard, *Seven Christmas Sermons*, tr. the Rev. Elmer M. Hohle, ed. the Rev. David O. Berger, Decatur, IL: The Johann Gerhard Institute, first edition, November 1996, pp. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 9“For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” **Romans 6:23**. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. 10**Hebrews 9:15-17**, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. 11The Mass is the Gospel, i.e. God’s Word and Sacraments. “But let us speak of the word *liturgy*. This word does not properly signify a sacrifice, but rather the public ministry, and agrees aptly with our belief, namely, that one minister who consecrates tenders the body and blood of the Lord to the rest of the people, just as one minister who preaches tenders the Gospel to the people, as Paul says, I Cor. 4, 1: *Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God, i.e.* of the Gospel and the Sacraments. And 2 Cor. 5, 20: *We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in God’s stead, be ye reconciled to God*. Thus the term *leitourgia* agrees aptly with the ministry.” *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession,* **Article XXIV. (XII.): Of the Mass**, *Of the Term Mass*.80, 81, *Triglotta*, p. 411. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. 12These covenants (arrangements, relationships) between God and men were called testaments because all relationships throughout history are underpinned by the Last Will and Testament of the Son of God. Hence, Moses forged the covenant with Israel with Blood. “And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.” **Exodus 24:8**. “With one half of the blood he sprinkled the altar, and with the other half he sprinkled the people, signifying the blood of sacrifice would unite God with Israel, calling it the blood of the covenant. ... As the Old Covenant was sanctified through blood, so especially was the New Testament. The blood of sacrifice of the Old Covenant prophesied of the covenant blood of the New Testament, and it had the power to atone for sin. Through the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, there was established a complete atonement and redemption, and an eternal covenant of peace between God and the sinners.” The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt, *Wisdom for Today*, Vol. I, tr. the Rev. Arthur E. Beck, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, p. 96, underscore added.

    Without the Last Will and Testament of the Son of God, not even the covenant of allowing the sun to rise and set and the world to turn would remain. “The world owes its continued existence to the unfinished task of the church in spreading that Word (Matt. 24:14).” The Rev. Dr. Eugene F. A. Klug, *Church and Ministry*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999, p. 135. That “Word”, of course, is the Last Will and Testament of the Son of God, the Gospel. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. 13“*We Christians must know that if God is not also in the balance, and gives the weight, we sink to the bottom with our scale. By this I mean: If it were not to be said [if these things were not true], God has died for us, but only a man, we would be lost. But if ‘God’s death’ and ‘God died’ lie in the scale of the balance, then He sinks down, and we rise up as a light, empty scale. But indeed He can also rise again or leap out of the scale; yet He could not sit in the scale unless He became a man like us, so that it could be said: ‘God died,’ ‘God’s passion,’ ‘God’s blood,’ ‘God’s death.’ For in His nature God cannot die; but now that God and man are united in one person, it is correctly called God’s death, when the man dies who is one thing or one person with God.*” The Formula of Concord, **Thorough Declaration**, **Article VIII. Of the Person of Christ.**44, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. 14*Luther’s Works,* Vol. 36: 38, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. 15“**What gives to the Sacrament the power to do these great things? The power to convey and impart to us these spiritual blessings lies in the worlds ‘Given and shed for you for the remission of sin.’ *By these words Christ has placed forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation into the Sacrament,* the body and blood being the seal of His promise. Therefore these words are, besides the bodily eating and drinking, the chief thing in the Sacrament.**” The Rev. Dr. Edward W. A. Koehler, *Luther’s Small Catechism*, with additional notes by Edward W. A. Koehler, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, no date, p. 307, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. 16**I Corinthians 11:25.** [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. 17“For there is no need to say, he means, that one must go up to heaven, or cross a great sea, and then receive the commandments, but things so great and grand hath God made of easy access to us. And what meaneth the phrase, ‘The Word is nigh thee?’ That is, It is easy. For in thy mind and in thy tongue is salvation. There is no long journey to go, no seas to sail over, no mountains to pass, to get saved. But if you be not minded to cross so much as the threshold, you may even while you sit at home be saved. For ‘in thy mouth and in thy heart’ is the source of salvation. And then on another score also he makes the word of faith easy, and says, that ‘God raised Him from the dead.’ For just reflect upon the worthiness of the Worker, and you will no longer see any difficulty in the thing. That He is Lord then, is plain from the resurrection. And this he said at the beginning even of the Epistle. ‘Which was declared to be the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection from the dead.’ (Rom. I. 4.) But that the resurrection is easy too, has been shown even to those who are very unbelieving, from the might of the Worker of it. Since then the righteousness is greater, and light and easy to receive, is it not a sign of the utmost contentiousness to leave what is light and easy, and set about impossibilities? For they could not say that it was a thing they declined as burdensome. See then how he deprives them of all excuse. For what do they deserve to have said in their defence, who choose what is burdensome and impracticable, and pass by what is light, and able to save them, and to give them those things which the Law could not give? All this can come only from a contentious spirit, which is in a state of rebellion against God. For the Law is galling ... , but grace is easy. The Law, though they dispute never so much, does not save; Grace yieldeth the righteousness resulting from itself, and that from the Law likewise. What plea then is to rescue them, since they are disposed to be contentious against this, but cling to that to no purpose whatever? Then, since he had made a strong assertion, he again confirms it from the Scripture.” St. John Chrysostom, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, *Volume XI, Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans*, ed. Philip Schaff, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprinted, September 1980, p. 474, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. 18*The Large Catechism*, **Part Fourth, Of Baptism**.41-43, *Triglotta*, p. 743, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. 19The Large Catechism, **[Part Fifth]** **Of The Sacrament of the Altar**.67-68, *Triglotta*, p. 769. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)