

**Crucifixion**

(***Albrecht Durer***,

***Large Passion***)

**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.



 **The Festival of Maundy Thursday**,

 **18 April 2019**,

 *Concordia Lutheran Mission,*

Terrebonne, Oregon.

“The Holy Communion is the New Testament, namely, the Forgiveness of Sins, Sealed with the Precious Blood of the Son of God to Strengthen Faith in the Hearts of Believers.”

Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup *is* the new testament in my blood,

which is shed for you.

**St. Luke 22:20.**

**Introduction**.

 Jesus goes to great lengths in the Sacrament of Holy Communion to impress the hearts of men with the Truth that God freely forgives their sins for Christ’s Sake. For Christ says the Cup is the New Testament, namely, the forgiveness of sins, in His Blood. Christ gives to men the forgiveness of sins sealed His Blood[[1]](#footnote-1) in order to persuade men that He is in earnest when He says He truly forgives their sins. For Blood is most Precious. To seal one’s word and promise with one’s blood impresses a man that he is in earnest. Christ seals His Forgiveness in the Sacrament with His Blood and, therefore, is deeply in earnest to impress upon the hearts of men that He truly forgives all their sins.

 His Blood in the Sacrament also reminds us that this forgiveness came at the Cost of His Passion. Jesus suffered on the Cross the death and everlasting damnation we and all men had earned. The Fruit of His Passion He communicates to men through the Holy Communion, i.e., the Gospel.[[2]](#footnote-2)

 Jesus Purchased this Precious Sacrament for us and for all men with His Holy Blood in His Passion. He takes that Forgiveness Won in His Passion on the Cross and seals it with His Precious Blood to impress our hearts burdened by sin that He is in full earnest when He forgives our sins, saves, and ushers us into life everlasting.

**I. Testament Means God becomes Man and Dies for the Sins of Men.**

**A. God makes a Testament means God becomes man.**

 At the Last Supper, Jesus makes His Last Will and Testament. The Evangelist St. Luke writes:

Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup *is* the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.[[3]](#footnote-3)

 Jesus says testament. What does that mean? A testament is a promise a man makes to bequeath to others upon his death what belongs to him. This promise goes into effect when he dies. 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.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Luther writes of the Last Will and Testament of God:

You see, therefore, that what we call the mass[[5]](#footnote-5) 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.[[6]](#footnote-6) 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.[[7]](#footnote-7) Thus the incarnation and the death of Christ are both comprehended most concisely in this one word, “testament.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

 Because God made a Testament, God, therefore, must and did become man and die.

**B. The New Testament is Forgiveness of sins by the Passion of Christ.**

 Because God made a Testament, God, therefore, not only became man by making a Testament means also God would die. God, indeed, did die. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden *wisdom*, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.[[9]](#footnote-9)

The Lutheran Church confesses that it was God that died on the Cross for our sins:

*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.*[[10]](#footnote-10)

 But why would God become man and die? God became man and died obviously not for Himself, for He is our Creator and has no need of such human experiences, but for us. God became man and died in order to shoulder the burden and consequences of their actions of fallen, sinful men in order to discharge those burdens for all men and save. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures ... .[[11]](#footnote-11)

 Through His Passion, Jesus fulfilled the New Testament. The New Testament is the forgiveness of sins for all men wrought by the Passion of Christ. The prophet Jeremiah writes of the New Testament and that it is the forgiveness of sins:

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; 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 sin no more.[[12]](#footnote-12)

 This Forgiving the iniquity of men and no longer remembering their sins came at the Price of the Passion of Christ.

**II. The Holy Communion is the New Testament Sealed with Christ’s Blood**.

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

 Jesus says in His Last Will and Testament that we hold the New Testament in our hands in the Holy Communion. The Evangelist St. Luke writes:

Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup *is* the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.[[13]](#footnote-13)

 *In the Holy Communion God places right in our hands the New Testament, namely, the Forgiveness of sins, which is the Gospel*. Here we see vividly 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.[[14]](#footnote-14) The Lutheran Church confesses that the Sacraments are God’s Visible Word or Visible Gospel:

But just as the Word enters the ear in order to strike our hearts, so the rite itself strikes the eye, in order to move the heart. The effect of the Word and of the rite is the same, as it has been well said by Augustine that a Sacrament is a *visible* *word*, because the rite is received by the eyes, and is, as it were, a picture of the Word, signifying the same thing as the Word. Therefore the effect of both is the same.[[15]](#footnote-15)

**B. Jesus seals the Promise of the Forgiveness of sins with His Precious Blood to impress our hearts with the Blessed Truth that God forgives us all our sins.**

 Remarkably, Jesus seals this Forgiveness of sins with His Precious Blood. Why does He do that? *Jesus seals the Forgiveness of sins with His Precious Blood to impress our hearts the Blessed Truth that God truly forgives our sins in the Sacrament*. Because sin deeply troubles the heart because the heart knows sin stirs the everlasting wrath of God, hearts need constant reassurance and forgiveness lest they fail for dread of the consequences of their sins. The Lutheran Church confesses that even the Cross of Christ reveals the gravity of sin:

*Yea, what more forcible, more terrible declaration and preaching of God’s wrath against sin is there than just the suffering and death of Christ, His Son? But as long as all this preaches God’s wrath and terrifies men, it is not yet the preaching of the Gospel nor Christ’s own preaching, but that of Moses and the Law against the impenitent. For the Gospel and Christ were never ordained and given for the purpose of terrifying and condemning, but of comforting and cheering those who are terrified and timid.*[[16]](#footnote-16)

 In other words, the gravity of sin is revealed by the Price Paid to deliver from it. It took the Infinite Majesty and Power of the Son of God to deliver any and all men from their sins. St. John Chrysostom states in a sermon from around the 4th century of the gravity of sin evinced by the Price Paid to deliver from sin:

... the wound required so great attendance, that the Lord of all came down to die, and so put a stop to the evil ... .[[17]](#footnote-17)

 Obviously, most men have no concern about their sin nor their relationship with God because most men despise the Sacrament, the Very Forgiveness of God placed right in their hands by God Himself. But for those who recognize the dreadful captivity of sin[[18]](#footnote-18), the Comfort can never be relished enough. In order to comfort those hearts terrified by the dreadful thought of offending the Almighty and Eternal God and at death waking up on the wrong side of eternity, Jesus seals the Forgiveness in the Sacrament with His Precious Blood. There is nothing more Precious than a man’s blood. In the Sacrament, God Himself Pledges His Precious Blood[[19]](#footnote-19) to seal the forgiveness of sins in order to impress upon the hearts of men shattered by the dreadful knowledge of their sin that God is in earnest about forgiving His sin in the Holy Communion.

 In the Sacrament of the Holy Communion Jesus seals the Forgiveness of sins with His Precious Blood in order to impress upon hearts troubled by sin that God Truly Forgive sins and saves.

**C. Christ Fashions the Comforts of the Gospel by His Passion**.

 In the Sacrament of the Holy Communion we see that our Lord and Savior not only Atoned for our sins by His Passion but that He also Fashioned the Good News of this Atonement and Salvation by His Passion so that we would know and be convinced of it and saved. Just think about that. Jesus spent His Precious Life to tell us He Atoned for our sins and saved. No greater Savior could be had. By His Passion He Fashioned His Last Will and Testament through which we hear the Blessed Message of Jesus Bequeathing to us sinners the forgiveness of sins, salvation, life eternal, the resurrection of the body, and the boundless and everlasting riches of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Lutheran Church confesses the extraordinary benefits of the Sacrament:

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?[[20]](#footnote-20)

**Conclusion**.

 Sin is dreadful. Admittedly, the vast majority of men don’t think living in the darkness of sin is dreadful. But for those who are struck by the dreadful captivity of sin -- after all, who wants to wake up from death on the wrong side of eternity? -- God seals the Forgiveness of sins with His Precious Blood in order to impress upon our hearts terrified by sin that He, indeed, without reservation Freely Forgives any and all for Christ’s sake.

 With this Blessed Knowledge of God in the Sacrament, Christians enjoy a secure and peaceful life in this world and in God’s everlasting glorious Kingdom to come.

 **Amen.**

1. “**These words tell us that in the Sacrament Christ gives to *every* communicant as a *pledge* of the remission of sins that *same body and blood* with which He *earned for us* the forgiveness of sins.** To make the answer bring out more clearly the benefit of the supper, we suggest the following wording:  **These words tell us that in the Sacrament Christ offers and assures to every communicant forgiveness of all his sins, and as a seal and pledge of this offer He gives him under the bread and wine the very body and blood with which He earned this forgiveness for him.”** *Luther’s Small Catechism*, with additional notes by The Rev. Dr. Edward W. A. Koehler, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, no date, p. 303, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Gospel is 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-2)
3. **St. Luke 22:20.** [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. **Hebrews 9:15-17**, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The 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-5)
6. These 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-6)
7. “*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-7)
8. *Luther’s Works,* Vol. 36: 38, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. **I Corinthians 2:7-8**. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The Formula of Concord, **Thorough Declaration**, **Article VIII. Of the Person of Christ.**44, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. **I Corinthians 15:3**, **4**. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. **Jeremiah 31:33-34**, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. **St. Luke 22:20.** [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. “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.” *The Large Catechism*, **Part Fourth, Of Baptism**.41-43, *Triglotta*, p. 743, underscore added.

 The Gospel is not only Holy Baptism but also the Word and the Holy Communion, which also, like Holy Baptism, bring the Lord’s Forgiveness right to us. “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-14)
15. *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, **Article XIII (VII): Of the Number and Use of the Sacraments**.5, *Triglotta*, p. 309. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. The Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration, **Article V. Of the Law and the Gospel**.12, 13, *Triglotta*, pp. 955, 957. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. St. John Chrysostom, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, *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. 412. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. “On the other hand, the Gospel brings consolation and remission, not only in one way, but through the Word and Sacraments, and the like, as we shall hear afterward in order that [thus] there is *with the Lord plenteous redemption*, as Ps. 130, 7 says, against the dreadful captivity of sin.” The Smalcald Articles, **Part III. Article III.** **Of Repentance**.8, *Triglotta*, p. 481, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. The Blood of Christ is the Blood of God Himself. “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” **Acts 20:28**, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. The Large Catechism, **[Part Fifth]** **Of The Sacrament of the Altar**.67-68, *Triglotta*, p. 769. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)