

Crumbs – Good News for the Diaspora!

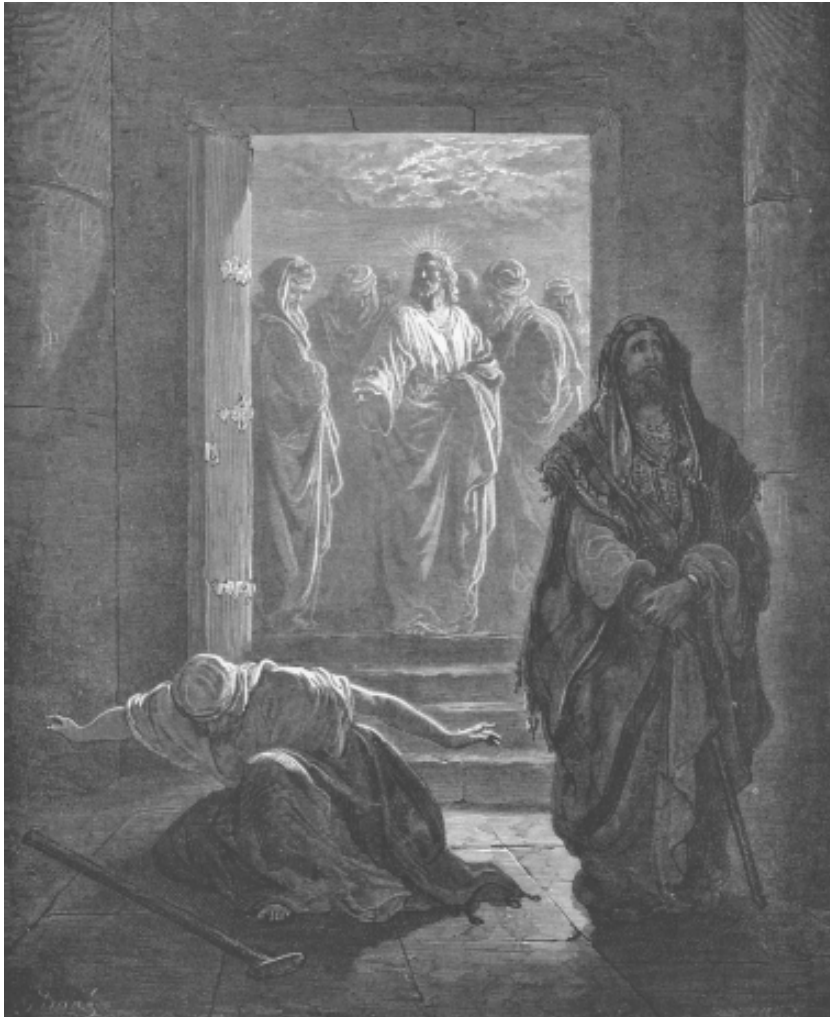


Illustration: The Pharisee and the Publican

A Devotional for the Week of the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.

SUNDAY.

Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. – 1 Corinthians 11:28-29.

Do you note this earnest admonition of the Holy Spirit? You must examine yourself to see whether you be worthy to receive the body and the blood of Christ under the consecrated bread and wine for the remission of sins.

Who is worthy to do this? Fasting and bodily preparation, appearing with due modesty and reverence at the Lord's Table, this is, indeed, a fine outward training and a praiseworthy custom; but they are nothing but outward acts which even a hypocrite may perform. The right and true, in fact, the only worthiness consists in believing these words: "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins."

If you approach the Lord's Table regarding yourself a forlorn sinner, seeking forgiveness through Jesus Christ, and if then you rely on the words: "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins," you are worthy and well prepared. But he that does not believe these words, or doubts them, is unworthy and unprepared. For when God, out of great mercy, gives us the body and blood of Christ and says: "For you!" namely, for the remission of sins, He wants us to believe this with a glad and grateful heart.

Thus you see that partaking of the Lord's Supper worthily is not effected by any external preparation, nor by thinking pious thoughts or by doing various deeds of your own choice or making. Thank God that it is not so. But if you come as a poor, miserable sinner who heartily desires to obtain salvation through Christ, which salvation is offered in the Lord's Supper, then you are acceptable with God, the Merciful. Examine yourself with regard to this.

PRAYER. – O Lord Jesus, You call not saints, but sinners, to the Supper which Your grace has provided, but such sinners as rely upon Your gracious Word. Grant me grace to always approach Your Table as a poor sinner, hungering after grace and trusting Your Word which promises grace, and to receive the forgiveness offered me therein with a believing heart. Amen.

Hymn 441, 5-7.

Christ says: Come, ye heavy-laden,
I your weary hearts will gladden;
They that are yet strong and well,
Despise the best physician's skill

Couldst thou earn thine own salvation,
Useless were my death and passion;
This feast is not spread for thee,
If thine own helper thou wilt be.

If thou this believest truly,
And confession makest duly,
Thou a welcome guest art here,
This heavenly food thy soul shall cheer.

MONDAY.

Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. – 1 Corinthians 11:28.

How should you examine yourself, and according to what rule, when you would eat of this bread and drink of this cup?

You should *first* examine yourself as to whether you truly repent of your sins. A child of God is most heartily sorry for his sins. A child of God is controlled and moved by the Holy Spirit, and

every sin is as intolerable to him as a mote in the eye. You should examine yourself *secondly* as to whether you believe in Jesus Christ. To believe in Jesus Christ is to have a correct knowledge of the great and mighty grace, ever new, which Jesus Christ has procured by His suffering and death, and which he has laid down in the Holy Sacrament and always offers you there freely and without price, and to put your trust in it, and comfort yourself with it in the face of all, indeed, all your sins. You should examine yourself *thirdly* as to whether it is your sincere purpose and intention henceforth to mend your sinful life with the aid of God the Holy Ghost. A child of God that is heartily sorry for his sins most assuredly is earnestly resolved to abandon those sins. And when this child of God has learned to truly know, and rejoice in, the super-abounding grace of God in Christ, he will also gladly mend his life, and most earnestly strive to please God.

Examine yourself as to whether these three things are found with you. If so, even though in a small measure only, -for you still have the wicked old Adam, then go to the Lord's Supper, and there again receive the assurance of the grace of God. That will strengthen you spiritually.

PRAYER. – My dear Heavenly Father, I know You love me still as Yours, though against me world, sin, hell combine. Grant to me Your Holy Spirit, that with heartfelt repentance for my sins, with true faith in my Savior Jesus Christ, and with a sincere purpose of henceforth mending my sinful life I may come to Your gracious Supper. And then bestow on me all the blessings which, by means of Your Word, You have treasured up in this Sacrament. Amen.

Hymn 436, 7.

Grant that we worthily receive
Thy Supper, Lord our Savior,
That for our sins we truly grieve,
And prove by our behavior

That we obtained Thy saving grace,
And trust in it throughout our days;
Then will our life be godly.

TUESDAY.

Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief! – Mark 9:24.

Faith, the faith of a poor sinner in his Savior Jesus Christ, constitutes the only true worthiness when appearing at the Lord's Supper. But how about those whose faith is weak? May they approach the Lord's Table? – Who is to be called weak of faith? Why, one who indeed believes in his Savior, but whose faith wants strength, and whose spiritual life, accordingly, is also weak, but – note this well! – who deplors his weakness and earnestly desires to be stronger, a person who cries like the father of that lunatic child, tearfully perchance, and says: "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief !" –May such a person go to the Lord's Supper? Yes, indeed. He particularly should partake of the Lord's Supper, that his weak faith may grow stronger by using this Means of Grace.

O the Savior rejoices when such a one comes to Him there to be helped by Him. He says: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37.) Isaiah already prophesied of the Savior: "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench." (Isaiah 42:3.) And is not one whose faith is weak like a bruised reed and smoking flax? Ah, the weak in faith is so miserable, and feels himself so unworthy and meek. But "the meek shall eat and be satisfied." (Psalm 22:26.) A person whose faith is still weak is sick, spiritually sick. The Lord's Supper is medicine, spiritual medicine. Shall he take it? Yes indeed!

– Does this comfort you, my dear Christian?

PRAYER. – Ah, my Lord Jesus, what am I? I am a weak, miserable person, like a bruised reed, easily shaken by the devil, the

world, and the flesh, and my faith is but a smoking flax, not burning with a bright and lusty flame. I know this and deplore it. And You would have me and You would help me and heal me and make me strong. For this I give thanks to You, Lord Jesus! And behold, I come to Your Supper and to You to be helped and healed by You. Amen.

Hymn 441, 4.

Thou shalt hold with faith unshaken,
That this food is to be taken
By the sick who are distressed,
By those whose heart is sin-oppressed.

WEDNESDAY.

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine. – Matthew 7:6.

These are words of our blessed Lord. By "that which is holy " He also means the Lord's Supper, which is one of our " pearls." By "dogs" and "swine" He means such as are known to be ungodly and impenitent; for after the manner of dogs and swine they abuse this most holy thing which the mercy of God has devised for us poor sinners. Is it not so? The Lord's Supper should be denied to such persons. They would eat and drink damnation to themselves in the Holy Supper. They are unworthy of the Lord's Supper. And "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body," says the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 11:29.)

And when a pastor knowingly and intentionally, out of indifference, from fear of men, or for the love of gain, admits such ungodly and impenitent persons to the Lord's Supper, then he flatly

disobeys the injunction of the Lord and brings down upon himself the curse of God. And when church-members, for any reason whatsoever, demand that such persons be admitted to the Lord's Supper, they are in the same position.

The Lord's Supper is instituted for Christians, for God's children, who repent of their sins, believe in Christ, and are earnestly resolved, with the aid of God the Holy Ghost, henceforth to mend their sinful lives. It is good and profitable for every one to take this to heart.

PRAYER. – Graciously grant, O Lord and Savior, that Your holy Sacrament may be kept sacred among us, and be used by us for our soul's welfare, and that it may not be cast before dogs and swine. Grant me and all sincere Christians grace to come to a true knowledge of this Your will and to take it well to heart. O let Your worthy Sacrament be among us what Your mercy has designed it to be: a table where wholesome food and drink is given to poor and grief-stricken sinners who put their trust in You. Amen.

Hymn 441, 3.

Whoso to this board repaireth,
Take good heed how He prepareth;
Death instead of life shall he
Receive who comes unworthily.

THURSDAY.

They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. – Acts 2:42.

To the heterodox, that is, to those who deviate from the Word of God in many points of Christian doctrine and believe and profess false doctrine, hence, to people who on account of such false

doctrines have separated from the orthodox church, or who want to hold and teach false doctrine within the pale of the orthodox church - to such heterodox persons we must deny the Lord's Supper, nor must we partake of the Lord's Supper in churches teaching false doctrines.

Why not? Is it because we must condemn every person who holds false doctrine? By no means! We know and rejoice in the fact that even among the heterodox God has dear children, souls that truly believe in Jesus Christ, but are not aware of the fact that they depart from, and contradict, the Word of God with their false doctrine.

Why, then, must we not commune at the same altar with the heterodox? Because altar fellowship is an outward and visible manifestation of unity of faith, of faith and church-fellowship. Those who break the bread together, that is, who commune together, thereby confess before the whole world that they have *one* faith, *one* doctrine, *one* confession, or creed, in common, as did the first Christians, of whom our text speaks.

To practice altar- and, in general, church-fellowship with the heterodox would mean to surrender that which is holy, and our pearls, and to acknowledge false doctrine, which we must heartily reject and condemn, because it opposes the salutary Word of God, to be true and right.

PRAYER. – Ah, Lord Jesus Christ, how sadly Thy Christian Church is rent asunder by false doctrine, sectarianism, and fantastic vagaries! Lord Jesus, I thank You that nevertheless You do sustain Your Christians, Your true disciples, who believe in You and are saved, even in the midst of such manifold and strong delusion. I furthermore thank You that You have granted me grace to know the truth. Give me, I implore You, Your Holy Spirit, that despite all contempt and calumny I may hold fast to Your Word and guard against every fusion with false doctrine. Amen.

Hymn 278, 6.

O God, preserve it pure and free
From this vile generation,
And let us be preserved by Thee
From their abomination;
The wicked walk on every side,
When 'mid Thy flock the vile abide
In power and are exalted.

FRIDAY.

If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. – Matthew 5:23-24.

Suppose that by a sin which you have committed, or by what appeared such, you have given offense to one or more or all of your brethren in the congregation, so as to give them reason to think that you are still impenitent, and, possibly, by your bad example to cause weak Christians to be led astray. What must you do then if you would be a true Christian?

You must at once, quickly, with haste, eagerly and willingly remove this offense. And how should you do it? You must tell all who know of the matter that you are heartily sorry for what you have done, and that you humbly seek comfort in God's grace, and with the help of God desire to mend your ways. And you must not go to the Lord's Supper, nor should your pastor permit you to commune, until you have done so. The offense would be far greater if you would go to the Lord's Supper before doing this. God wants you to first remove the offense in this manner.

See what our text at the head of our devotion says. No offering, no prayer, nothing that you may do, least of all your partaking of the

Lord's Supper, is acceptable with the Lord unless you remove the offense you have given. But a true child of God, who is sincerely sorry for his sin, certainly is glad and willing to remove the offense he has given by his sin.

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus, I am Yours. Keep me from sin! Because I am Yours, I am Your witness who is to proclaim You by word and deed, that Your Christian Church may be built also by me. Graciously guard me against giving offense to others! And when, by reason of the weakness of my depraved flesh and the temptations of the evil spirit, I have given an offense, do help me by Your Holy Spirit to repent straight-forth and remove the offense. And then let me be assured of Your grace through Your holy Sacrament! Amen.

Hymn 430, 1, 2.

Thy table I approach,
Dear Savior, hear my prayer,
O let no unrepented sin
Prove hurtful to me there.

Lo, I confess my sins,
And mourn their wretched bands;
A contrite heart is ever wont
To find grace at Thy hands.

SATURDAY.

Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. – 1 Corinthians 11:28.

You are familiar with this word of Scripture. A Christian should examine himself before going to the Lord's Supper as to whether he be in the faith and therefore will receive this Sacrament worthily.

For that reason we must not give this Sacrament to such as cannot examine themselves, for instance, not to those adults who as yet have not a sufficient knowledge of the Word of God for such self-examination. They should first be instructed in the same. Nor should we admit little children to this Sacrament, for though, through Baptism, they have been united with Christ in faith, yet they do not understand the Word of God sufficiently to be able to examine themselves. They should be instructed in the Word of God as soon as possible, and when they have arrived at a satisfactory spiritual maturity, they should be given the Lord's Supper.

In our churches we therefore have the laudable custom of confirmation. There the children that have been instructed, publicly, in the presence of the congregation, give account of their faith, confess their faithful adherence to the Church of the true faith, and thereupon receive the holy Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ.

Nor should the Lord's Supper be given to sick people that are in a state of unconsciousness, or to such insane as are unfit for self-examination. But in all this we must not forget that the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, surely sustains the light of faith within their hearts and makes them partakers of salvation, if they have not otherwise been unbelievers.

And now, my dear Christian, examine yourself, whether you be a poor penitent sinner who believes in his Savior and is willing to serve Him, and then approach the Lord's Table, where you receive such complete and glorious assurance of the grace of God.

PRAYER. – Help, Lord God, that I, a poor sinner, may sincerely repent of my sins, find true comfort in Your merit, desire to mend my life, and thus at all times, unto my end, receive the assurance of Your grace which Your holy Sacrament so abundantly offers to me. Amen.

Hymn 432, 7.

Sun, who all my life doth brighten,
Light, who dost my soul enlighten
Joy, the sweetest man e'er knoweth,
Fount, whence all my being floweth, –
At Thy feet I cry, my Maker,
Let me be a fit partaker
Of this blessed food from heaven,
For our good, Thy glory, given.

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