

# Practical Insights on the Sacraments from Adolf Hoenecke

*Two Sermons on Baptism and the Lord's Supper*

Translated by

Jason D. Oakland

8 December 2003

These sermons by Adolf Hoenecke appeared in a collection of his sermons entitled *Wenn ich nur dich habe*. The 1896 edition of this book was used for this project. It is a collection of his sermons from the last year he served as the pastor at *St. Matthäus-Gemeinde* in Milwaukee (1889-1890). He served that congregation from 1870-1890. He followed the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wuerttemberg Pericope throughout his final year of service there. The first sermon on Baptism is based on Matthew 28:18-20, the Gospel appointed for Trinity Sunday. The second sermon on the Lord's Supper is based on John 21:12. There is no date or occasion given for it. It is only entitled an *Abendmahls-Predigt*.

With these sermons, Adolf Hoenecke, the pastor, addresses the Sacraments in a very practical way. He is speaking in plain terms to the dear flock entrusted to his pastoral care. We see his pastoral concern. We see the practical issues facing his people. We see his grasp of Scripture and Lutheran doctrine. We see his great appreciation for the Sacraments as the Means of Grace. Since the Sacraments are being maligned as much in our day if not more than they were in the days of Dr. Hoenecke, it is truly a great blessing to learn from his wisdom and insight.

I have translated these sermons in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Senior Modern Christianity under Professor James F. Korthals. It is also my hope that this translation will help future generations to appreciate the work of those who have gone before them. We stand on their shoulders, and they have given our church a solid foundation.

*Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you.  
Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. – Hebrews 13:7*

Jason D. Oakland  
8 December 2003  
Mequon, Wisconsin

*On Trinity Sunday*  
Matthew 28:18-20

<sup>18</sup> Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (NIV)

In Christ, dearly beloved!

We have a custom here in this congregation of ours, which is just as commendable as it is beneficial. This custom is that the baptism of children takes place during the church service in the presence of the entire congregation. This is a commendable custom because it befits the importance of Baptism. This is also a very beneficial custom. For, all those who are present in church will remember to their benefit the importance of their baptism. As they join in praying to God for others at the baptizing of children, they will also pray to God for themselves; with thanks that they were indeed baptized and with sighs that they continue in their received adoption. Therefore, it would also be very beneficial if a most necessary instruction about Holy Baptism be given briefly to the congregation at every baptism. This does not happen at the present time. All the more, we should welcome our Gospel Lesson for today which not only encourages us to meditate on Holy Baptism but also gives a most important lesson about it. So, the object of our consideration is:

- Holy Baptism
- I. Its noble dignity
  - II. Its miraculous manner
  - III. Its important responsibility

## I. Its Noble Dignity.

In what does the noble dignity of Baptism consist? Does it perhaps consist in some externally exalted and impressive pageantry? Certainly not! In Baptism, everything is done quite simply, without pageantry. The infant to be baptized is brought forward. A prayer is said for him. After this, he is sprinkled with water which is accompanied by the proclamation of a few words. With that, a baptism has taken place. If one were to judge only on the basis of the things that he can see in the act of Baptism, then one would have to conclude that Baptism does not have any noble dignity and honor. Reason also passes judgment in this way because it only judges on the basis of those things which it can see. This is the case with the Sectarians who pass judgment in many respects entirely on the basis of reason. Thus, the Sectarians and Methodists can look on their method of conversion as a great, worthy, and highly dignified thing through which a supposed work of the Spirit is *right before their eyes* in a noble external gesture. In their eyes, however, Baptism is a small and unimportant thing which does not have such a noble, external appearance.

Baptism, however, does have a noble dignity and honor, only it does not rest on external things. Rather, the noble dignity of Holy Baptism consists in its institution.

*Who* has instituted it? Men did not do this, not highly respected human dignitaries, authorities, and governments, not kings or emperors, who indeed are *called* “most high” and “all-powerful.” The one who *really* is all-powerful has done it: Jesus who can say of himself, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” He is man and God in one person. He is the Almighty. He is true God begotten of the Father

from eternity. God himself instituted Baptism. Baptism is a *divine* ordinance and institution. This is what gives it dignity and honor in the noblest way.

*For whom* has Baptism been instituted, commanded, and decreed? Was it only for a few of us Lutheran Christians or just for *one* nation or people? Certainly not! Hear the command of the Lord, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them.” Baptism was given and presented to the entire world. It should be used throughout the whole world by all people. The whole world should practice and use Baptism, just as *we* do. Where is the human law or ordinance that applies to the entire world like Holy Baptism which God has commanded for the entire world? This certainly gives Baptism dignity and honor in the noblest way.

*When* was Baptism instituted in such a ceremonious way? What do we hear in our text? It happened on Ascension Day.<sup>1</sup> Jesus, the Savior of the world, left the Church with his *visible* presence. He made his excellent and ceremonious departure. In love and grace, he blessed his disciples and the whole Church, indeed, the entire world on this occasion. Therefore, Jesus, our God and Lord, rightly instituted and commanded Baptism as a testament of his love and grace for the entire world. How great is its dignity and honor!

*Who carries out* Baptism according to its institution? Now, the answer is easy, “Go and baptize.” This is spoken to pastors. You are correct, but it is not the whole answer! For pastors should baptize in the *Name of*: in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, pastors are only the external, visible *helpers*. The

---

<sup>1</sup> The text that Professor Hoenecke used here is Mt. 28:18ff. This event takes place on a mountain in Galilee, cf. Mt. 28:16. According to Ac. 1:12, the Ascension took place on the Mount of Olives. Regardless, the Institution of Baptism took place during the forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension. In this way, Institution of Baptism is very closely connected to the Ascension.

One who actually baptizes is Jesus, our Lord and God, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. With every baptism, the great, exalted Triune God does a work of grace and love right before our eyes. So it is with Baptism according to the clear words of its divine institution. Thus, we cry out again, “Oh how great is the dignity and honor of Baptism!”

There is still one more point! *For how long* after its institution should Baptism be administered in the world? Customs are often changed! That which stood in high esteem centuries before is despised today. God himself has instituted and then changed customs, e.g. sacrifices and circumcision. This is all true. However, Baptism remains and should remain unchanged just as Jesus, the True God, instituted it as long as the world stands. For, Jesus said, “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” After he commanded Baptism, he clearly said it should be conducted and used until the end of the world, until the Last Day. If one looks at Baptism in such a way, then, even if the act still appears unimportant to his eyes and reason, one must say, “Yes, it has an inexpressibly noble and excellent dignity and honor.”

But how does one consider this noble dignity of Baptism in a well-deserved way? To this question, we will first give an answer *common* to Christians in general. That answer is: As true Christians, you should consider the noble dignity, the divine honor of Baptism in this way, that you confess it and then honor and praise it with your confession. You are also to remind and rebuke the many Christians, who need exactly that. There are many of them. Members of the Sects are innumerable, and they have no regard for Baptism. They do not at all look at the fact that the Lord Jesus *ordered* and commanded it. Whether one is baptized or not, it does not matter. This is a terrible sin, a

dreadful apostasy from Christ, and a severe corruption of Christianity. In this way, it is really an appeal to orthodox Christians to hold *high* the noble dignity and honor of Baptism and to rebuke corrupted Christianity of its corruption, and even in places where Baptism still has its honor, *to add to it*, so that it remains so.

How does this happen? We will see this as we give an answer to the question (how does one regard the noble dignity of Baptism) especially to those Christians who must make use of Holy Baptism for their family. You, you who have a Baptism performed, give the noble honor and dignity of Baptism *to the Baptism ceremony itself*. Thus, do not choose sponsors, who are unfit for it. If you choose young Christians, choose only those who are somewhat seriously disposed. Those who behave quite flippantly after confirmation and neglect Christian doctrine, preaching, and God's Word, are not to be sent as witnesses for this nobly dignified ceremony of Baptism. One should not choose unbelievers either, even if they are the closest of relatives. The position of a sponsor is not to honor men, but to honor the Baptism. Here, one must not look at relationships but to the exalted God and Lord, Jesus, and the noble dignity of Baptism. But what should even those who are flippant and unbelieving do as sponsors? Sponsors should also show the child that he was brought up in a Christian way. You don't expect such a thing from the flippant and unbelieving, do you? One should not choose heterodox people as sponsors either. It does not show a high regard for Baptism if, by my invitation, I have people as sponsors, who despise Baptism. On Sundays, if we would invite a number of worldly people to sing their unbelieving worldly songs together with us as we sing our Christian hymns, what would you think? It would be horrifying! In our Lutheran church, when the pastor baptizes and reads about the excellence, honor, and

power of Baptism along with it, then he praises God in faith and Lutheran sponsors participate in it. However, an unbelieving or heterodox sponsor denies all this in his heart. While we are praising God in an orthodox way at the Baptism, he is blaspheming God with his contemptuous thoughts about Baptism. This is horrible! Surely you all agree with this. May we never do this! Let us all be aware so that the Baptism ceremony itself is held in as high a regard as it is fitting for the dignity due it.

I will say this to those who are baptized, “Regard the noble honor and dignity of Baptism to your *Baptism Day*.” If this day is celebrated as day of rejoicing, then it is right and pleasing. The birthday of a child is a day of rejoicing; how much more the day of his Baptism! For without this, one must appropriately speak the truth, “It would be better for him if he had not been born!”<sup>2</sup> It avails for the Christian, “Rejoice... I will say it again: Rejoice!”<sup>3</sup> If one celebrates it with the food and drink of joy, then this is fitting. All food and drink is fitting and, in and of itself, “nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving.”<sup>4</sup> It also says, “Rejoice *in the Lord*!” But gluttony through gorging and swilling even to the point of repulsive drunkenness! This is not receiving food and drink with thanksgiving. This is profaning the name of God. Baptismal celebrations of this kind are a horror and disgrace. This is shamefully despising the noble honor and dignity of Baptism. May this never be the case among us Lutheran Christians! You may be certain that this kind of celebration has served very well to bring Baptism into contempt and to make a stench of the name “Lutheran.” Therefore, all should help out in a Lutheran congregation and do their share so that the noble honor and dignity of Baptism is rightly regarded.

---

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 26:24

<sup>3</sup> Philippians 4:4

<sup>4</sup> 1 Timothy 4:4



## II. Its Miraculous Manner.

But, what works Holy Baptism into a miracle? It is so great a miracle that one can not marvel enough at it. Comfort is spoken to us with the words, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." One must rightly understand how the matter really stands with God's name. As is God's name, so is his glory. To be baptized in God's name means that it is done according to God's command. It means further that it is actually God himself who baptizes. It means further that he proclaims his loyalty to the one being baptized, receives him, and gives him to himself. To be baptized in God's name means as much as God declaring through, with, and in Baptism, "You are mine, and I am yours; I will be your Goodness and Portion with all that I am and can give."

If one is baptized in God's name, then this is not only an external declaration, but such a Baptism in God's name establishes a true friendship, community, and partnership between God and his saving conduct. However, we must take a closer look at this according to our text. Here, a metaphor regarding sponsors may help a little. They give gifts at the Baptism according to their ability. One gives this, and another gives that according to his ability and manner. Now, if we are baptized in the name of God; the three Persons of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, do the same. Each Person truly shares a special excellence. Now, this is what the Father does as the most glorious and excellent thing for us poor creatures, so that he is called the Father. This is a sweet, gracious name. When God is called Father and wants to call someone his child, indeed it is so! This happens when we are baptized. When we are baptized in the name of the

Father, we are baptized entirely into *him being our Father* and *us being his children*.

From that time on, he should be called nothing other than, “Abba Father!”<sup>5</sup>

Now what has the Son Most Excellent who became man for us done? What has he done that he may now say, “Who can accuse me of a sin!” What has he done that he is the Righteous One and has the righteousness that avails before God? Now, if we are baptized in the name of the Son, we are baptized into his perfect righteousness, so that it is entirely ours and we are justified from all sin, so that from now on we no longer say of ourselves, “I am impure and unholy,” but, “I am washed clean, sanctified, justified. I am a dear, perfect saint because now I am completely in the name of the Son, completely clothed with his righteousness.”

What has the Holy Spirit done as his special excellence? He has the gifts of the Spirit, the spiritual gifts and blessings, which produce a spiritual, godly life. If you are baptized in the name of the Holy Spirit then that means you are baptized and placed into the abundance of the Holy Spirit’s heavenly gifts and blessings. In short, dear brothers and sisters, if you are baptized in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, then this produces a miracle in a poor sinful child of man which one can neither grasp it nor accommodate himself to it. We have this right before our eyes in the Gospel which was read from the altar today. There the Lord Jesus speaks to Nicodemus about this miracle-working. This dear man, a teacher of Scripture, is so amazed at this noble thing that he does not know how to grasp it. In short, the noble miracle is *rebirth*, which the Triune God works through this Baptism, a powerful gift of grace.

O excellent, valuable miracle! To Baptism, one brings a poor child of the world and of wrath—and behold, from Baptism, one carries him away as a child and heir of

---

<sup>5</sup> Romans 8:15

God. He goes to Baptism as one filthy, impure and from Baptism as one holy and righteous. He goes to Baptism as one who is dead and expired and from Baptism as one who is spiritually alive, endowed with new spiritual powers, with faith, love, and hope. Indeed, a new creature, a new spiritual, godly, blessed creature comes away from Baptism through this miraculous power. Scripture modestly praises all these things in Baptism. Galatians 3:27, “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” Titus 3:5, “He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.” Acts 2:38, “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” Mark 16:16, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” Our Catechism also says, “What gifts or benefits does Baptism grant? It brings about forgiveness of sins, redeems from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe it, as the words and promise of God declare.”<sup>6</sup>

How can Baptism work such a great miracle? Nicodemus also asked this question. Our Catechism also asks this in order to answer this question for the sake of instruction, “Clearly the water does not do it, but the Word of God, which is with and alongside the water.”<sup>7</sup> This is a correct answer. God calls Baptism through Paul “the washing with water through the word.”<sup>8</sup> Which is that Word of God? It is “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Through this Word, the Triune God

---

<sup>6</sup> Sacrament of Holy Baptism, *Small Catechism* II (Hereafter, SC): 5-6. Kolb, Robert and Timothy J. Wengert. *The Book of Concord*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000. p. 359. (Trig. p. 551).

<sup>7</sup> Sacrament of Holy Baptism, SC III: 9. Kolb-Wengert, p. 359. (Trig. p. 551).

<sup>8</sup> Ephesians 5:26

says to you, “I, myself, want to be present with water and in the water of Baptism with all my grace as Father and Son and Holy Spirit. I want to give, work, and create according to my grace in the one who is baptized.” The Triune God alone can do this gracious work in a poor sinner. Indeed—the only God, Father, Son, and Spirit, is present even in the water of Baptism *full of his grace*, because he himself promises it through the Son in the words of institution, “Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” If this Word is not there, then Baptism is therefore nothing more than water. It is certain because of this Word, for God’s Word does not lie. God, who works all things, Father, Son, Spirit, is present there in Baptism with his full grace, creating and working. Therefore one answers correctly, as our Catechism does, “The water does not do it... but the Word.”<sup>9</sup> Do you understand why? Namely, if it is the Word with the water, then it is also the gracious God with the Word. Now, that is enough teaching about this. Baptism is a most excellent gift of grace, indeed this is certain and true.

Who, then, should experience and enjoy the miracle-working of this powerfully gracious Baptism? The first answer I will give is, “All those who go through life as poor sinners of whom it avails, ‘Flesh gives birth to flesh.’”<sup>10</sup> Here it stands, “Go and baptize *all nations!*”<sup>11</sup> This means husband as well as wife, old as well as young. In this way, one should not keep Baptism away from anyone but bestow on him this gracious gift. This includes little children. As the Lord also says, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them.”<sup>12</sup> How does that sit with you? Our Lutheran Christians will say, “This sits just fine with us Lutheran Christians.” While the Sectarians withhold

---

<sup>9</sup> Sacrament of Holy Baptism, SC III: 9. Kolb-Wengert, p. 359. (Trig. p. 551).

<sup>10</sup> John 3:6

<sup>11</sup> Paraphrase of Matthew 28:19

<sup>12</sup> Mark 10:14, Luke 18:16. In German, the same words are in Matthew 19:14, but with a different word order.

Baptism from children, we allow our dear children to be baptized. Yes, but when should we baptize them? Should one allow a child to lie unbaptized four to six weeks? This is very, very wrong. Is there anything better for the child than that he receive the grace of rebirth as soon as possible? Why would you prevent the child from coming to Christ and entering the kingdom of God when you withhold Baptism from him for so long? Surely, God does not give parents the right to withhold this excellent Baptismal grace from children for such a long time, but his command to baptize is certainly a command to the parents to bring their children to the Font as soon as possible. If parents knew what grace is given to their children in Baptism, then their true parental love must surely beseech them to let their children partake of this grace as soon as possible.

To the question, “Who, then, should experience and enjoy the miracle-working of such a powerfully gracious Baptism?” I give still another answer, namely, “Anyone, as long as he is living on the earth!” The gracious and merciful God wants all who have been baptized to think of their Baptism fully in faith throughout their life and in faith seize their Baptism for themselves day by day with all its great miracles of grace. This should create great comfort and spiritual strength on a daily basis. See, in your Baptism, your heavenly Father has clasped you to his heart as his child and wrapped you in his Fatherly arms. This is daily renewed again and again when you return to your Baptism in faith, so to speak. Is this not a comfort for this life, a comfort so precious and refreshing, indeed, so absolutely necessary? If a hostile world surrounds you as it does all Christians, you have a safe, certain place in your Father’s heart and in his strong arms. If need and sorrow present themselves, you say comforted by your Baptism, “I rest in the heart of my Father, rich in love, and in his wonderworking arms—what should I care?”

If your days are still so dark and your life still so very puzzling, then you will say for the sake of your Baptism, “The heart of my Father in which I rest as his child is a wise heart and will work out all things for my good. How, then, can I be afraid?” See, in your Baptism, the Son of God has given you his perfect righteousness. If you daily turn in faith to your Baptism which happened previously, there your loving Lord, the Son of God, reassures you that this righteousness will certainly remain yours. What could comfort you more than that? For, you have to lament daily for your many sins which accuse you before God. Now, full of faith, you again seize your Baptism for yourself, which happened in a way that the robe of Jesus’ righteousness once again covers every spot of sin. Baptized and justified anew in spirit and faith, so to speak, you say happily,

Sins, disturb my soul no longer;  
 I am baptized into Christ.  
 I have comfort even stronger:  
 Jesus’ cleansing sacrifice.  
 Should a guilty conscience seize me  
 Since my Baptism did release me  
 In a dear forgiving flood,  
 Sprinkling me with Jesus’ blood?<sup>13</sup>

What comfort this is! How this creates peace! If you daily turn in faith to your Baptism, then this valued Holy Spirit will multiply for you his heavenly gifts of faith, love, and hope. How this creates comfort! The more there is faith, the more there is salvation; the more there is love, the more there is strength; the more there is hope, the more there is patience. It is certainly true that to return daily in faith to one’s Baptism is truly, as the pool of Siloam once was for the sick, a washing for healing and

---

<sup>13</sup> Erdmann Neumeister (1671-1756), wrote the hymn *Lasset mich voll Freuden sprechen*. It is found as printed in the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*. This is the second stanza of 246 “God’s Own Child I Gladly Say It.”

strengthening for us Christians in that we come out again as happy children, saints of God, believing, loving, hoping; in short, as newly saved people.

### III. Its Important Responsibility

The responsibility, which Holy Baptism lays upon all who are baptized, is important because through it all who are baptized are responsible for a *most important thing*. The Lord says this, "Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you." In short, one would say, "Hold on to the teaching of Jesus as it stands in Scripture." Above all, this is the Gospel, the doctrine of faith. After this, however, there is also the doctrine of good works and fruits of faith, so that one walks in love toward God and his neighbor with his whole heart. The entire Law with its Ten Commandments hangs upon this twofold love.

Therefore, you, my dear brother or sister, young as well as old, have this noble and sacred responsibility through your Baptism, that you hold to the teaching of Christ with faith, remain in the Word of Christ, follow his Word and his voice exactly and unshakably with a faith of the heart and a confession of the mouth. Believe nothing other than what his Word says, and acknowledge nothing as true and right except for it. Accept nothing that is not according to the Word and Gospel of Jesus, even if many men who are so learned want to teach you otherwise. Remain faithful therefore in the instruction of your Lutheran Catechism about Word and Sacrament. *This* is certainly and truly the correct, pure Gospel and doctrine of faith, which Jesus has taught through the Apostles in Scripture and has commanded all people to believe. I do not need to say much in order to

show that this is an exceedingly important responsibility. This is indeed a noble thing. So absolutely and with all earnestness, hold to the saving teaching of Jesus with your faith and confession till the end of your days.

To this we add a second point. One must also hold to the teaching of Jesus about good works. Therefore, as one who has been baptized, you should walk in love toward God and your neighbor, live sincerely according to the Ten Commandments, and abandon evil against both God and your neighbor. On the contrary, do good works whether to God for his glory or to your neighbor for his benefit. You should live *devoutly* as one who has been baptized. Baptism binds you to this. In Baptism, your life according to the flesh should have ended and your life according to the spirit should have begun. You should live *righteously*. Baptism binds you to this. Through Baptism, you are transferred from the kingdom of the devil and sin to the kingdom of God and salvation. Your life must be *godly*. Through Baptism, you are indeed transferred from the *kingdom* of the world and its ways of lustful looks, sins of the flesh, and its arrogant essence into the kingdom of *heaven*. As is the kingdom to which you have been brought through Baptism, so must your life and conduct be: devout, righteous, godly, heavenly-minded, with an aim toward things above where Christ is, who demands of you, you baptized Christians, “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.”<sup>14</sup> This is what our dear Catechism summarizes in this way, “What then is the significance of such a baptism with water? It signifies that the old creature in us with all sins and evil desires is to be drowned and die through daily contrition and repentance, and on the other hand that daily a new person is to come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity

---

<sup>14</sup> Matthew 6:33



forever.”<sup>15</sup> If you daily humble your arrogant reason which wishes to be governed not by the Word of Jesus but by its own thoughts, if you daily deny the fleshly, unholy, earthly sense in your heart so that you do not live in sin most willingly and defile the name of Christian, the name of those who are baptized, then the Old Adam dies. If you daily turn to the Word and Gospel of your Savior Jesus and are strengthened in faith and zealous in your love, then the New Man lives.

This responsibility is important. Let it be important for you also, both for you and for your family. *For you!* Think also now on this and be encouraged as well to keep it! If Christ wishes that you be taught and instructed in this responsibility, then hear and seek this teaching as well so that you are always learning and being encouraged more to keep this responsibility. Think about it often with earnestness. Ask yourself if you keep it well. This responsibility is so important for you family, especially for your children. Remind them to diligently attend church so that they also are taught to keep their responsibility. Watch over them! Encourage them also that they themselves watch and pray. Let this baptismal responsibility be important to you, both to you and to your family. Much still depends on that which concerns this dear Holy Baptism and its honor. How greatly it is slandered in this way! Lutheran Christians are indeed baptized but afterwards they live in such a way that one would indeed think that Baptism meant nothing. In this way, sadly, many Lutheran Christians cause the Lutheran name to stink and, God be grieved, serve to slander their most Holy Baptism. You don't want that, do you? See how the most holy good of Baptism depends on keeping in mind the important responsibility to it!

---

<sup>15</sup> Sacrament of Holy Baptism, SC IV: 9. Kolb-Wengert, p. 360. (Trig. p. 551).

This is also important *for your families!* If you do not remain in the baptismal covenant, then you do not remain in Christ. Then you are not his holy people to whom it is promised, “And surely I am with you *always*.” Then you are also not saved. Hear the final words, “To the very end of the age.” Then comes the Judgment. Whoever does not remain through faith in his Baptism and his baptismal covenant, he will be condemned. For, “whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”<sup>16</sup> No one can make excuses. He cannot say, “I did not know that one must actually live as a baptized Christian.” For this is known according to Jesus’ Word to you, “Teach them to obey.” You also cannot say that you were too weak to obey it, for the promise was also given to you, “And surely I am with you always.” Christ would certainly be powerful in your weakness. Let this baptismal responsibility be important to you: *Live* rightly from a right *faith*. Then nothing is lacking: As long as you remain what you became in Baptism—a child of God—then it is fulfilled, “if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ,”<sup>17</sup> indeed near him and with him for all time and into eternity. Amen.

---

<sup>16</sup> Mark 16:16

<sup>17</sup> Ro 8:17

## *Abendsmahls-Predigt*

### John 21:12

<sup>12</sup> Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord.

In Christ, dearly beloved!

“Come and have breakfast!” In this way, the Lord invited the disciples, and the disciples knew that it was the Lord who invited them. Come and dine! So, it is spoken to you today. The invitation sounds forth from the mouth of a fellow man and a fellow sinner, but it is nevertheless the Lord who invites you. It is *his* meal to which the invitation calls. I, who call you, am only a messenger in his stead, and he exhorts and calls through me. Meanwhile, I convey *his* message and invitation to you, to which it applies, “Whoever listens to you, listens to me.” If it is certain that the Lord himself calls to you, “Come and dine!” then come also as those who know and understand it well.

#### Come and Dine!<sup>18</sup>

- I. As those who know whom the Lord will see at his table
- II. As those who know with what the Lord will feed his guests
- III. As those who know what thanks the Lord expects from his guests

- I. Come and Dine! As those who know whom the Lord will see at his table

Dear Christians, whom has the Lord invited when he said with his own mouth, “Come and dine”? It was the disciples of the Lord. That is good to note. However, it is

---

<sup>18</sup> The German for the theme is “Kommt und haltet das Mahl!” which is an exact quote from John 21:12. This phrase is literally translated, “Come and have a meal.” This is meant to be a play on words including the theme, John 21:12, and an invitation to the Lord’s Supper. The NIV more accurately reflects the meaning of the original Greek text which says, “Come and have breakfast.” [Δεῦτε ἀριστήσατε.] The English version that comes closest to Professor Hoenecke’s play on words is the KJV which translates the phrase, “Come and dine.”

also good to pay attention to how this invitation strikes them. They find themselves on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Peter had said, “I’m going out to fish.”<sup>19</sup> His fellow disciples had expressed their willingness, “We’ll go with you.” What is the reason they have for doing this? They want to find food for their hunger. However, on that night, we hear, they caught nothing. In the morning, the Lord came to them with the question, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?”<sup>20</sup> They answered him, “No!” To these disciples, who were hungry and had nothing themselves to quiet their hunger, the Lord addresses his invitation, “Come and dine!”

Indeed, there is another meal to which I now invite you in the name of Jesus, “Come and dine!” In this text, the Lord calls them to an earthly feeding, to a feeding for the body. Today, an invitation is issued to you for a spiritual, heavenly feeding, a feeding for the soul. However, this invitation is intended for the same people, namely, *disciples of the Lord*.

Indeed, we also know of a heavenly, spiritual meal to which the *whole* world is invited. This is the great banquet of the Lord<sup>21</sup> to which the guests are sought and brought from the streets and alleys and invited to sit and eat at his table. By this meal, by this great banquet of the Lord, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of grace is intended. There, a person, who is still far from God, who has not come to Christ, is called as a guest now to come to Christ and in repentance and faith become a disciple of Christ. However, it is different with the heavenly meal to which the invitation is now issued, “Come and dine!” It is an invitation to the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. Here only those are invited, *who have become disciples already*, who already walk as believers

---

<sup>19</sup> John 21:3

<sup>20</sup> John 21:5

<sup>21</sup> das grosse Abendmahl

following Christ. Disciples are invited, and indeed such as those who are in the same condition spiritually as the disciples in our text were physically. They hunger spiritually and have also nothing themselves to quiet their hunger. Disciples are invited who hunger for righteousness that avails before God and who know all too well that they cannot provide this righteousness for themselves. Therefore, they cannot quiet their hunger and longing by themselves.

As such, you should know that these are the ones whom the Lord *will see* as guests at his Supper table. Therefore, you are added neither to those who hold themselves out as most worthy guests but are not; nor to those who are afraid and waver that they might not be received by him but really are his dear guests.

It seems to many a person that he is living as an exceedingly righteous disciple of Christ and that he is very blameless but he is full of conceit over his own Christian life. Whoever thinks like this and goes to the Lord's Supper with the thought that Jesus would indeed rejoice in him as a welcome guest is greatly mistaken. For, he is a *satisfied* person, satisfied with *his own righteousness*. However, Christ precisely wants those who hunger after righteousness. Jesus does not want those as guests who come to the Lord's Supper in order to *flaunt* their own righteousness but those who come there to *seek* and *find* righteousness. This should certainly not be the case with you that you would be satisfied with your own righteousness and say, "By myself, I have righteousness before God through my own doing and life." Dear Christians, you have all Ten Commandments. You need only to look in this mirror of God's holiness to a limited extent. It will be evident to you that when it comes to the question, "Do you really have a

righteousness which is valid before God by your own Christian life and works,” you can only answer, “No!” If we do all this, then we are and remain good-for-nothing servants.

However, it indeed happens that a disciple of the Lord must confess that he has lived in a way that was truly unworthy of his calling as a disciple and is guilty of a serious fall. One such as this thinks that he could not be a welcome guest at the Table of Grace. With a contrite heart, he may be certain that the invitation of Jesus avails to him spiritually, just as the friendly invitation to a physical meal in our text availed to the disciple Peter, who had once fallen deeply. Therefore, if your fall was deep and now you are all the more anxious with a true hunger in the soul for the perfect righteousness of Christ and you want with all your heart to receive it given and sealed in the Lord’s Supper, then certainly this most friendly invitation is issued precisely for you, “Come and dine!”

II. Come and Dine! As those who know with what the Lord will feed his guests

To the question, “Do you have nothing to eat,” the disciples on the Sea of Gennesaret must confess, “We have nothing.” So, the Lord fed them. If *they* did not have food, then *he* must have. With his own food, he fed them. Indeed, he told them to throw out their nets still one more time, and they caught with this *one* throw so many fish in their nets that they were not able to pull them in. However, this throw was needed not just so that the disciples could apprehend the fact that it certainly was the Lord who worked this great catch with a miracle. This throw was needed not just so that he could feed the disciples. For, when the disciples walked onto land, they saw bread and coals

with fish on them. Where did this come from? We do not know where, nor can we fathom it. It is enough to say that the Lord had a supply which the disciples did not have, and he fed the disciples with his own supply, when he called them to a meal saying, "Come and dine!"

Dear Christians, this is again a beautiful picture of the Lord's Holy Supper. In the Lord's Holy Supper, the Lord and Savior feeds his dear guests from his own supply in exactly the same way. He feeds them with his body and with his blood. Thus he himself declares to us in the words of institution, "Take, eat; this is my body. Take, drink; this is my blood." What a wonderful meal! It truly is the right meal to quiet the hunger with which the genuine guest at the Lord's Table brings to the Supper.

Certainly, many who always maintain that they hold to the Word of Christ do not understand this. Entire Christian communities are conceited enough to think that they hold a correct spiritual and reasonable doctrine of the Lord's Supper, because they teach that all Christ said about giving his body and blood to eat and to drink is only to be understood in a figurative way. They say, "What would be the use of anyone actually eating Christ's flesh or drinking Christ's blood?" Oh, what terrible blindness! By no means do they understand the deep, saving secret of the Lord's Holy Supper! They do not recognize that the gift that Christ gives his body and blood to eat and drink in the Lord's Supper is infinitely great. He gives his body, which is given into death for sin. He gives his blood, which flowed for redemption. With his body and blood in the Lord's Supper, he gives to you, as guest at his supper, *the* ransom for all your sin in the fullness of truth and actuality. He gives to you in this way a share in the redemption from all of sin's corruption which happens in such abundance through nothing else. With the

Redeemer's body and blood, he gives to you through this feeding such a certainty of the forgiveness of sins as nothing else gives it to you. Therefore, to a truly believing and enlightened Christian, the teaching that he feeds his guests with his body and blood in the Lord's Supper is surely not somehow a strange accessory to the Lord's Supper that he must put up with. Precisely for him, however, it is the heavenly and saving core of the Lord's Holy Supper in order that the Lord might feed him with his holy body and give him his holy blood to drink.

As those who know this, come and dine! Come as those who believe with holy reverence that, under the bread and wine, you should eat the true body and blood of the Lord. Then, nothing is lacking. The hunger with which you came is completely quieted. You hungered after righteousness, and you are satisfied. You eat the body and blood of the Lord, given and shed for the payment of all your sins. You have redemption. With your partaking in faith, you are sealed as righteous ones, who have the righteousness which avails before God. That, which none of your own works or deeds could attain, brings you a partaking in faith of the Lord's Holy Supper, namely, the forgiveness of sins and righteousness. The most blessed certainty, which no work or deed brings to your wavering soul, brings to you the partaking in faith of the Lord's Holy Supper, namely, certainty. *I have* forgiveness! *I am* righteous before God. As the Lord himself said to you, "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you! Take, drink; this is my blood, which is shed for your sins." As those who know, come and dine! Sigh in sincere faith,

Holy Bread, by me be blessed!  
 Because by you I am his guest,  
 Whose body is so full of wounds,  
 The depths of my redemption sounds.  
 So that I may a Savior have,  
 Who suffered, died, and in the grave



Was also laid for my own guilt  
Savor you and ponder I will.

Holy Wine, by me be blessed!  
For just as Christ's own blood splashed  
And for my sins forgiveness bought,  
Which by that blood receive I ought.  
So that I will my Savior have  
Who souls revives in the waves  
How can this seem so strange to me?  
To drink the blood he offers me!<sup>22</sup>

III. Come and Dine! As those who know what thanks the Lord expects from his guests

As the Lord dined with his disciples at the Sea of Gennesaret and made himself known through this, as was clearly said, so that a noble, heavenly blessing was bestowed on the disciples again through this mere physical meal, he also had a special heart to heart talk with Peter. Three times he asked the disciple who once had denied him three times, "Do you love me?" Three times Peter answered, and indeed he must answer truthfully, "You know that I love you." Three times the Lord said, "Feed my lambs!" as if he wanted to say, "Prove your love with actions." After this, the Lord shared a prophecy with Peter about his death, "When you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." He prophesied to him about the death by which Peter would glorify the Lord, namely, the death of a martyr. With such a death, Peter would *glorify* the Lord. Namely, Peter would willingly

---

<sup>22</sup> Ernst Gottlieb Woltersdorf (1725-1761), wrote the hymn *Komm mein Herz in Jesu Leiden*. I could find no English translation of this hymn, as a result these verse are my translation and feeble attempt at poetry. The verse that Professor Hoenecke quoted are the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> verses of this thirteen verse German hymn.

and joyfully give up his own life for the sake of Jesus. Finally, the Lord now said to Peter, "Follow me!"<sup>23</sup>

Dear guests at the Lord's Table, after enjoying the Lord's Holy Supper today, if the Lord had a heart to heart talk with each of you, then he would speak to you as he did to Peter. You may now accept it without hesitation. The Lord actually carries on such a conversation with each of you and allows you to recognize what he expects in the future from today's participants in the Lord's Supper. Only take it in the way he says it to each of you, "My dear Christian, if you have now been my guest and have been fed by me so wonderfully in love, then will you also love me and prove this to me also through works and deeds? I expect this from you as thanks. You are still often guided by your body according to the world and the flesh. I hope now if temptation approaches you again, you will think of me, what I now expect of you, and what is indicated to you with my question, 'Do you love me?' Therefore do not do the will of the world, the flesh, and sin again." Take it as the Lord says to each of you, "I expect nothing else than that you will praise me in the future, and for my sake you would gladly sacrifice everything and regard nothing so highly that you would not give it up for my sake, and let it be worth nothing to you, that you would give it up for my sake." Take it as the Lord says to each of you, "My dear Christian, you who have been revived again at my heavenly Table, I expect this as thanks from you that you follow me, walk according to my Word, live in my Commandments, and confess me before the whole world."

As those who know what thanks the Lord expects from his guests, come and dine! Come as those who recognize willingly from the heart as truth all the things that the Lord rightly expects of those after they partake of the Lord's Supper. Each of you, say,

---

<sup>23</sup> He references the whole account found in John 21:15-19.

“Indeed, Jesus, my Savior, can exactly expect that I love him after the Lord’s Supper, and love him even more than I did before and sincerely prove it to him also through works and deeds. It is truly not asking too much to expect this. Through the Lord’s Supper, he works in me the greatest blessing that he can work. Through it, he makes me certain that I am saved. There is no greater blessing than this certainty for me, a mortal man who every day comes nearer to his end. So, I must truly love my faithful Savior anew and love him sincerely after the Lord’s Supper since he worked such a great a blessing in my soul. Each one of you must also confess, “Yes, certainly, I deny myself for Jesus’ sake and praise him with all the offerings that I can, which indeed the gracious Lord may expect as thanks for my partaking of his Supper. In the Lord’s Supper, I enjoy the most precious fruit of his self-denial. He did not regard his life too precious, but offered it up for me to the torments of hell. It is truly not an unfair demand if my Savior expects of me the fruit of thanksgiving after the Lord’s Supper, so that from then on I am willing to offer also for him the most worthy and precious thing.” You must also confess that the Lord may rightly expect it of you that after the Lord’s Supper you are found faithfully following him. In the Lord’s Supper, he has revealed himself to be so gracious to you, so that you may discern and taste him given as the life of your soul. Jesus can indeed expect of you only that, following the Lord’s Supper, you follow him with new eagerness, new faithfulness, and a new desire, so that you act in this way, “Where should I go and whom should I follow except my Lord Jesus, who will lead me into eternal life.”

As each one of you must confess, “That which the Lord expects of me after the Lord’s Supper, he may rightly expect as my sincere and heartfelt thanks,” then each of

you may say, "I want to do this! I solemnly promise to do it. After the Lord's Supper, I want to keep my promise. Gracious Lord, help me to do it!"

So then, come, you who long for the righteousness which avails before God. Come, you who are looking forward in faith to the heavenly feast of body and blood which will satisfy your hunger for righteousness. Come, you who pledge new love, a new willingness in offerings, and a new following. Come and dine! Amen.