

December 20, 2017
Advent Three Midweek

Let us consider a hypothetical question. It's Christmas morning. You had friends and family over after Christmas Eve service last night to open gifts and make merry. You stayed up late and when they left, you went straight to bed. There is shredded wrapping paper and empty plates and glasses all over the living room. The bathrooms are disheveled. Now you woke up late, skipped your shower and morning routine and are working furiously to prepare the Christmas feast, thus the kitchen is total chaos. In other words, you and your home are a total train wreck.

"Ding-Dong," somebody is at the door. You look through the peep hole and standing outside is Jesus Christ your Lord holding a big gift-wrapped box. What do you do?

Okay, it's kind of a ridiculous scenario, but that's kind of the way it actually is in reality every Sunday here at Grace. This is your house; your church, yet you've had a messy, sin-filled week. And Jesus Christ makes an advent, an arrival, here very clearly in the Sacrament of the Altar, the Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, the Eucharist. Whatever you call it, it is Jesus Christ, His body, His blood here FOR YOU for the forgiveness of sins.

The doorbell, so to speak, has clearly been rung by Jesus. He has given the command, "Do this in remembrance of me" and the church has done so since its inception. That Christ bears a great gift in this Sacrament is also crystal clear, "for you, for the forgiveness of sins." So why is it that so many react wrongly toward the Sacrament?

Of course, some just don't know this guy Jesus standing there. They don't answer because He is a stranger. Maybe they've heard a bit about Him and they think it's some kind of trap. Whatever, these are the folks with whom we need to be sharing Jesus because they need the gift He bears. We all do. So I exhort you to share Christ as you have opportunity.

But there are an awful lot of people who do know Jesus...and the gift He bears, yet they don't open the door; they don't come for the Lord's Supper. Why? Because that feast they're cooking and the cleaning that needs to be done are more important and they don't want to be disturbed. They're "too busy" with the priority of earthly life. Jesus adverts for them, but they think they've already got enough Jesus because they know His story and give Him a prayerful nod once in a while, but they leave Him standing in the cold outside. Seriously, I think we all know, and are maybe even are related to, people who think church and the Sacrament offered here is a kind of take-it-or-leave-it kind of thing.

Jesus says, "Do this." That's not at all unclear. In saying "No," they are really rejecting Christ. Physical body and blood, right there, to fill your need, and you say, "No thanks."

You might remember this analogy and share it in love with someone who needs to hear it. There really is no good argument when Jesus is saying "Do this" for your own good.

And of course, some are impenitent and just love their sin. To open the door means turning away, repenting, and they simply aren't willing to do that. Lord, have mercy, and change their hearts.

But for you folks, the few who show up for the midweek Advent service, I don't think this is a problem. But we also can mess up this wonderful scenario.

I think a lot of us love Jesus but hesitate when it comes to opening the door. Why? We're a mess! It's not just that we've sinned. It's that we've sinned and we know we're going to fall into those same sins again. We're embarrassed of our house. To have the holy and righteous Christ enter our dwelling, our body, when it's in such a state of affairs? It just seems the height of hypocrisy! But we do open the door, because this is Jesus the Lord. We receive the Sacrament. But we do so feeling self conscious and guilty, underserving and dirty.

This is bad to, because it's like you've invited Jesus into your house...and then refusing to open the present He bears!

His resurrected, perfect and holy body and blood is present FOR YOU to accomplish the purpose for which Christ sends it: forgiveness, justification, salvation and life everlasting—the is what the Supper does. It's true that your ugly sinful nature sticks to your flesh always. But did Jesus live, die, rise and then give you His body and blood that you might somehow make yourself good enough for Him??? No! His passion and victory is FOR YOU because you never could!

In His Holy Supper He arrives not as angry judge, but as loving and merciful physician, bearing the cure for your disease of death. Most surely faith unto repentance is what leads you to this meal, to open the door so to speak, but the advent of Christ in, with and under the bread and wine banishes your guilt. There is no hypocrisy here because the gift that is the righteousness of Christ FOR YOU, covering you, makes you in fact righteous before God the Father.

Despite yourself, the Lord's Supper is rightly nothing but joy for you. The mess doesn't matter. The other demands of life can't compare. Like Holy Baptism, the Lord's Supper is Jesus Christ in all of His salvation glory adventing on your body and soul in His body and blood. Basically, it's Gospel you can eat and drink.

And the truth is that you aren't inviting Jesus in. He invites you to His table for your good. You aren't supposed to be good enough. If you were, you wouldn't need the salvation He is serving. To be "worthy" of the Supper, if even that word can be used, you simply must know you need the forgiveness He is giving and believe that it is there for you.

The Lord's Supper and the advent of Christ therein is not so much about Jesus finding His place here in your earthly life, although the gift does strengthen us for our days here. The

Word, the Washing and the Supper, God's means of Grace, are all more so Christ bringing you to His table in the kingdom. These are simple ways He gives the gift; the hard stuff has already been accomplished by Christ—that's why He is Christ!

So like Moses and the seventy elders on the mountain, and as one of the multitudes who will one day in eternity dine bodily in Christ's presence at the wedding feast of the Lamb, joyfully partake of the Eucharistic feast that He orders and offers, because without a doubt it is, **FOR YOU.**

Amen.