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McSupper or Lord's Supper?

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McSupper or Lord's Supper?

Abstract

"With a holy reverence and joy that comes from knowing the Gospel, we come to his table."

Posting about participation in holy communion from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/mcsupper-or-lords-supper/>

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Disciplines

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Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service](#) at Dordt College.

McSupper or Lord's Supper?

 [all in allthings.org/mcsupper-or-lords-supper/](https://allthings.org/mcsupper-or-lords-supper/)

Mark Verbruggen

Jesus took bread and said, “*Take, eat; this is my body.*” He then took a cup and said, “*Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins*” (Matthew 26:26-28). The three synoptic gospel accounts—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—all tell us the story of the institution of the “Lord’s Supper,” one of the two sacraments of the church.¹ There is no shortage of books, articles, and doctrinal statements concerning the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. How is Christ present in the sacrament? Who are invited to the table of the Lord? Should people come forward to receive the bread and wine, or should it be served where they are seated? Is a common cup required, or is it fine to use individual cups? Is “Intinction”² a proper way to receive the bread and wine? All the questions and debates concerning the Lord’s Supper indicate that we as Christians recognize this sacrament is important. When Jesus says, “Take, eat, and drink”, this is not a suggestion, but a command.

When I was young, the Lord’s Supper was a solemn and rare occasion. There may have been preparation sermons, daily devotionals, and preparation “forms” prior to the event. This was done out of a genuine concern for making the sacrament a holy and serious encounter between God and his people. No one was supposed to presume to participate unless they were a professing member of the congregation in good standing. Guests in church would be brought to the elders seated at a table, who would grant permission to those requesting to take part. Again, this was all done out of a genuine concern for people’s spiritual well-being “lest they eat and drink judgment unto themselves” (I Corinthians 11:27-34). As the liturgical form for the celebration was being read, a list of “gross sins” was declared to keep the unregenerate away from the table of the Lord.³ By the time you came to the end of the list, everyone present would have been banned from the table (or so it would seem). No wonder the “Form for the Lord’s Supper” was right next to the “Form for Excommunication”!

As time went on, participation in the sacrament has become a little less daunting. Because of this, some might even argue that it has lost its sense of “holiness” and “seriousness”. It’s now something we just *do*. In order to liven up the ceremony, we have even introduced “McSuppers”: prepackaged communion elements consisting of a tasteless wafer and nasty “red drink” are distributed to the masses without concern for doctrine, faith, or lifestyle. The real “joy” of the Lord’s Supper has become a Happy Meal for everyone and the “prize” is Jesus. Never mind if the participants could actually articulate, let alone have a minimal understanding of, who Jesus is and what he has done for them on the cross.

The church today would do well to think deeply about the sacrament and how we celebrate it, avoiding either of the two extremes described above. To make it a sacrament of true joy, rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ, we ought to remember it is a reenactment of that Gospel in which our Lord is truly present with us. The real presence of Christ makes it truly joyful and deeply serious. It’s not a buffet for everyone. At the same time, it’s not only for the religious elite who fancy themselves to be worthy of participation. The only Worthy One is Jesus himself, and he graciously invites us to come to his table—saints and sinners alike. Those who come in faith receive the true body and blood of Christ. A lot of Christians don’t understand this, and that is reflected in the typical celebration of the sacrament. For some, the Lord’s Supper is merely a memorial to a past event. However, when participation is done in faith, Christ is really, truly present in the bread and wine, through the Holy Spirit. Jesus never said, “This bread represents my body.” In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus says, “This is my body”, “This is my blood.”

The Belgic Confession says, “To represent to us this spiritual and heavenly bread Christ instituted an earthly and visible bread as the sacrament of his body and wine as the sacrament of his blood.” And then the Confession moves on to speak of the miracle of grace that happens for all who participate in true faith. It says, “Christ did this to testify

to us that just as truly as we take and hold the sacraments in our hands and eat and drink it in our mouths, by which our life is then sustained, so truly we receive into our souls, for our spiritual life, the true body and true blood of Christ, our only Savior. We receive these by faith, which is the hand and mouth of our souls.”⁴

The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is Christ’s gift to the church. With a holy reverence and joy that comes from knowing the Gospel, we come to his table. In the words of Daniel Schutte’s Communion Hymn: *“Come to feast of heaven and earth! Come to the table of plenty! God will provide for all that we need, here at the table of plenty...O come and sit at my table where saints and sinners are friends. I wait to welcome the lost and lonely to share the cup of my love. My bread will ever sustain you through days of sorrow and woe. My wine will flow like a sea of gladness to flood the depths of your soul.”*⁵

Footnotes

1. John’s gospel account is different. Beginning in John 13 we hear about Jesus washing the feet of his disciples before reclining with them over what must have been the last supper before his crucifixion. [↩](#)
2. the action of dipping the bread in the wine at a Eucharist so that a communicant receives both together [↩](#)
3. “Wherefore we also, according to the command of Christ, and of the apostle Paul, admonish all who know themselves to be defiled with the following gross sins to abstain from the table of the Lord, and declare to them that they have no part in the kingdom of Christ: such as, all idolaters, all who invoke deceased saints, angels, or other creatures; all who show honor to images; all who resort to or confide in sorcery, fortune-telling, charms, or other forms of superstition; all despisers of God, and of His Word, and of the holy sacraments; all blasphemers; all who seek to raise discord, sects, and mutiny in the church or state; all perjurers; all who are disobedient to their parents and superiors; all murderers, quarrelsome persons, and those who live in hatred and envy against their neighbors; all adulterers, fornicators, drunkards, thieves, usurers, robbers, gamblers, covetous persons, and all who lead offensive lives.” [↩](#)
4. Belgic Confession, Article 35 [↩](#)
5. “Table of Plenty”, Lift Up Your Hearts, # 808 [↩](#)