

In The Cross Of Christ I Glory.

Text: Gal. 6:14

Suggested Hymns:

52, 48, 171, 848, 54

1) Because I Approach The Sacrament In Humble Faith

2) Because I Receive Great Benefits

3) Because I Make known The "Fruits Of Redemption"

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Galatians 6:14, ***14 But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Nowhere in our religious life does our Lord manifest Himself so clearly or draw so closely to us as in the Sacrament of the Altar, the blessed sacrament of His body and blood, where with the eyes of faith we behold His real presence and may truly sing, *"Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace ... for my eyes have seen Thy Salvation."*

Certainly it was our Lord's intent that His followers have this tangible contact with Him, when He instituted this memorial of His Passion and incorporated therein the very elements of sacrifice which He offered upon the altar of the cross, namely, His body and blood.

And while the sacrifice of Good Friday was distanced from the solemn feast of Maundy Thursday by space and time, these two were nonetheless combined by our Lord into one inseparable, holy, mysterious ordinance.

The visible elements of bread and wine were so joined in Communion with the body and blood of our Lord that we may correctly sing, *In the Cross of Christ I Glory.* May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. In The Cross Of Christ I Glory

Because I Approach The Sacrament In Humble Faith

In Faith

We read in John 13:1–15, ¹ *Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.*

² *And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him,* ³ *Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God,* ⁴ *rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself.*

⁵ *After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.* ⁶ *Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?"* ⁷ *Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this."*

⁸ *Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."* ⁹ *Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"*

¹⁰ *Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you."* ¹¹ *For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean."*

¹² *So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?"* ¹³ *You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am.* ¹⁴ *If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.* ¹⁵ *For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.*

As we read John's account of the Last Supper, we cannot but feel that here our Lord had reached the climax of His doctrine of faith.

All through His ministry He had stressed the importance of believing in Him. *"Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well"* He assured the woman with an issue of blood.¹ *"According to your faith let it be to you,"* He told the blind men as He restored their sight.² *"Where is your faith?"* was the rebuke He gave to His frightened disciples in the storm.³

And on the sacred night of His betrayal, His words called again and again for faith on the part of His disciples, as we read in John 14:1, ***You believe in God, believe also in Me.*** And in John 14:11, ***“Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.***

And so it cannot be otherwise: unless we accept Jesus Christ and are united with Him through faith, the sacrament of His body and blood can have little meaning for us.

Not as though His real presence is dependent upon, and a result from our faith, but because we do not receive the benefits which our Lord offers us in the sacrament unless we believe this truth: *the very body and blood which He offered in full payment for my sins are mine, personally mine and individually mine, because I receive them in the sacrament which He instituted for this purpose.*

At an earlier stage in His ministry our Lord said, as we read in John 6:47–51, ***“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”***

This picturesque language became fulfilment on the night before He died. Thus we are enabled to sing, *“In the cross of Christ I glory,”*⁴ whenever we approach the sacrament, because our faith not only embraces Christ Himself as our Saviour, but it also accepts His gracious presence there, namely, that the believing communicant receives orally, eats and drinks, Christ’s true body and blood, given and shed for the remission of sins.

In Humility

This approach, however, must also be characterised by humility. The great Prayer of Humble Access is: *“We do not presume to come to this Thy table, O Merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in Thy manifold and great mercies: We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under Thy table.”*

In our text Paul disclaims even a hint of personal worthiness. *God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.* The psalmists approach is equally humble, as written in Psalm 67:1, *¹ God be merciful to us.*

In the same manner, therefore, let us adopt a spirit of self-negation and humility. Glorifying in nothing except the merits and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, resting solely upon the mercies and blessings of our heavenly Father, let us come to the Lord's Table with bowed heads. In that spirit we shall be most receptive of its benefits.

2. In The Cross Of Christ I Glory Because I Receive Great Benefits

The author of the hymn *"In the Cross of Christ I Glory"* shows how the cross makes our bad days good, and our good days even better.

And certainly this is a most apt summary of the great benefits to be derived from the sacrament. We glory in the cross as we see it in the sacrament, because of the eternal gifts which become ours through the partaking of it.

The strengthening of our faith, the personal assurance of our forgiveness, comfort in affliction, preparation for death, strength for a holier life, the joyful sharing of a common faith with others, are all gifts which defy description and measurement.

But there is one which we so frequently overlook — that function of the sacrament which makes Calvary endure as a living memory till the end of time. Christ said, *"Do this in remembrance of Me."*⁵ And in 1 Corinthians 11:25, *This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."*

Paul continues ²⁶ *For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.* Till He comes — this is why Holy Communion has always been looked upon as the centre and most vital part of the church's worship. This is the binder across the centuries which has made of the holy Christian church on earth a *"communion of saints,"* by which we link hands from generation to generation *"till He comes."*

3. In The Cross Of Christ I Glory Because I Make known The "Fruits Of Redemption"

Receiving these most holy benefits, of course, cannot but elicit a response. To receive the body and blood of our Lord must foster a feeling of love for God and love for our neighbour.

We heard this in the Epistle before, ¹⁴ *For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died;* ¹⁵ *and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.*

... ¹⁷ *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

... ²⁰ *Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.* ²¹ *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*⁶

It should be the heart-felt response of Christian to love God and to love our neighbour because we are a new creation and the love of Christ controls us, and that we are ambassadors for Christ.

When our Lord instituted the Sacrament of the Altar, He called it the “*new covenant.*” We read in Matthew 26:28, ²⁸ *For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*

Thus the prophecy of Jeremiah was fulfilled, ³¹ *“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah —* ³² *not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.* ³³ *But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”*⁷

This house of Israel had been chosen by God to be a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation,” with a missionary obligation. We read in Exodus 19:6, ⁶ *And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”*

God's choice of Israel did not imply election to privilege so much as election to responsibility. But when they failed to measure up to this responsibility, then God not only made a new covenant, but He also called a new Israel to replace the old.

We read of this in 1 Peter 2:9–10, ***⁹ But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ who once were not a people but are now the people of God.***

This new Israel, of which you and I are a part, have now this same missionary obligation and vocation. We “*glory in the cross of Christ*” by sharing this knowledge with the nations of mankind, by proclaiming, “*In Him is salvation, life, and resurrection from the dead; by Him we are redeemed and set at liberty.*”⁸

And as the people of God in the Old Testament commemorated their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt by celebrating the Passover, so also the people of God in the New Testament commemorate their deliverance from the bondage of sin by celebrating Holy Communion.

We read in 1 Corinthians 5:7–8, ***For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. ⁸ Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.***

Let us close with the words of the hymnist,

In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o’er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.

Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure,
By the cross are sanctified;
Peace is there that knows no measure,
Joys that through all time abide. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Matthew 9:22

² Matthew 9:29

³ Luke 8:25

⁴ Hymn 171

⁵ Luke 22:19

⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:14–21

⁷ Jeremiah 31:31–33

⁸ Introit for Maundy Thursday