

Proclaiming the Gospel Through the Sacraments

by Hans Boersma

The Eucharist is a form of preaching that proclaims the Gospel through the memorial acclamation and the sacrifice of ourselves.

Duration: 1:29:25

Scripture: Psalm 80:9, Matthew 6:33, John 15:4, Romans 12:1, Philippians 2:17, 1 Peter 2:5

Topics: "Sacraments"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker explores the connection between the act of eating and drinking in the Eucharist and the proclamation of the Lord's death. He uses a story from the early church about martyrdom to illustrate how the sacrifice of a few individuals became a ransom for the sins of the nation. The speaker emphasizes the importance of Christians being prepared to proclaim the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, even if it requires personal sacrifice. He concludes by stating that when Christians participate in the Eucharist, they are proclaiming Jesus Christ and participating in his sacrifice.

Transcript

Well, good morning again, everybody. It's good to be with you. I want to talk with you this morning about the relationship between preaching and Eucharist.

The relationship between preaching and Eucharist. And I don't mean by that that we'll first talk about preaching and then about the sacrament, which would, I suppose, be an entirely legitimate thing to do. But it's not what we're going to be doing this morning.

Instead of talking about Word and Table, we're going to more or less flip them around, except not Table and Word, but Table as Word. So I want to talk with you this morning about the topic of Table as Word. Table, or altar, as a form of preaching, as a way of proclamation.

In the very act of celebrating the Eucharist, in other words. So that's the main message of the talk this morning. In the very act of celebrating the Eucharist, we're proclaiming the Gospel.

Hence the title of the workshop, Proclaiming the Gospel Through the Sacrament. So how is it that the act of celebrating the Eucharist is itself a missionary act, an act of proclamation? One way of answering the question might be to say, well, when we celebrate the Eucharist, after the priest has said the words of

institution, he says to the congregation, let us proclaim the mystery of faith. Let us proclaim the mystery of faith.

You know the wording, right? Let us proclaim the mystery of faith. And the reminder in those words is that there is something that you and I in our pews are going to proclaim. And we respond as congregation with the words, we respond with the words, Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

Now that little part of the Eucharistic service is the memorial acclamation, as many of you know. The memorial acclamation. And in some form or other, it goes back all the way to the 6th century.

It's an ancient part of the liturgy. So while the priest preaches the Gospel in the sermon, the entire congregation, all of us together, preach the Gospel at the table when we proclaim those words. And that small part of the Eucharistic service, the memorial acclamation, goes back actually not just to the 6th century, but you could say it goes back to Christ's words in the upper room.

St. Paul reports this in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it and said, This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me, verse 24.

And then the same with the cup. The cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me, verse 25.

And right after that we get the words, For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until it comes. That's verse 26. So note that St. Paul maintains a close link between eating and drinking in the Eucharist on the one hand and proclaiming the Lord's death on the other.

So how is it that in the act of eating and drinking we're actually proclaiming the Lord's death? How is the Eucharist a form of preaching? How is it an act of missionary proclamation? Well to see how it is that you and I and the entire congregation are preaching when we are eating and drinking, I want to take you to a famous story of the early church. It's a story of martyrdom. It's not an easy story in some ways.

But in that story Roman soldiers are looking for a dangerous offender and finally find him after having tried all the tricks in the book and a household slave betrays the victim. They go up to an upstairs room to an upper room and in the upper room there they find the person they've been looking for. And to their astonishment the offender isn't the dangerous kind of person they figured it would be, but instead an old man.

Hardly the kind of person that would pose a danger to the empire. But orders were orders and so these Roman soldiers around the year 155 arrest Bishop Polycarp in the upper room. And they drag him to the stadium in today's, in Smyrna, a town on today's west coast of Turkey.

And there he is face to face with the prospect of either lions or burning steak. Polycarp doesn't cringe though. He's intent on proclaiming the gospel.

And in the martyrdom of Polycarp we read the following. When he came near the proconsul asked him whether he was Polycarp. On his confessing that he was, the proconsul sought to persuade him to deny Christ, saying, have respect for your old age and other similar things according to your custom, such as swear by the fortune of Caesar, repent and say away with the atheists.

The atheists were the Christians, right, because they don't serve, they don't serve the pagan gods. Well then comes that block quote that you have in your outline, at least those of you who have an outline. Let me just pause it for a second, who does not have an outline? Just a couple here up front.

I shouldn't be too sorry for these friends here. But at least it gives them an outline all the same. So we come to that block quote.

But Polycarp, we read there, gazing with a stern countenance on all the multitude of the wicked heathen then in the stadium, and waving his hand towards them, while with groans he looked up to heaven, said, away with the atheists. Then the proconsul urging him and saying, swear and I will set you free. Reproach Christ, Polycarp declared.

Eighty-six years have I served him. He never did me any injury. How then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour? Now those famous words of Bishop Polycarp have echoed through the centuries.

Shortly after that, the soldiers tie his hands behind his back and lead him to the stake, where he then offers his thanksgiving, his yucharestia, to God. A prayer of thanksgiving to God. Ending with these words, I praise Thee for all things.

I bless Thee, I glorify Thee, along with the everlasting and heavenly Jesus Christ, Thy beloved Son, with whom to Thee and the Holy Ghost be glory both now and to all coming ages. Amen. Those were the last words of Bishop Polycarp as he sacrificed his entire self in thanksgiving and yucharistia to his God and Saviour.

Those words of Polycarp, those last words are a liturgical prayer. The spoken in preparation before he offers up his eucharistic sacrifice. His martyrdom is the eucharistic sacrifice.

So note what it is that he's doing. He is following Jesus in martyrdom. He sacrifices everything he has, brings it all to the altar, his entire being, by way of sacrifice to his God.

And his prayer of thanksgiving, his eucharistic prayer, makes clear what is happening. He is sacrificing himself, and in sacrificing himself, he is proclaiming Jesus. Jesus' very own sacrifice.

So when we celebrate the Eucharist, what we do is we offer a sacrifice of praise. We pattern our lives, if need be, hopefully to the point of death, we pattern our lives on that of Christ. We're bringing everything to the altar.

Our capacities, our work, our earnings, our relationships, everything. The Eucharist is about sacrificing everything we have and are to God in Christ. Now, in case that looks as though we're proclaiming ourselves, perhaps, bringing everything we have and are to the altar, let me make a few comments on that.

It is true, we bring all of our gifts to the table. In the Eucharistic host, we give everything that we have and are to God. We're sacrificing ourselves indeed, offering ourselves up to God.

All that is true. And yet, in sacrificing ourselves, we're not proclaiming ourselves. Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again.

That is the memorial acclamation, right? But how is that true if we sacrifice ourselves in the Eucharist? For that, I want to briefly turn with you to St. John's Gospel. Because there's several links that closely connect

this story of the martyrdom of Polycarp to John's Gospel, and especially the 15th chapter. There's several links there.

First, we read in the martyrdom of Polycarp that the soldiers found him lying down, and I already mentioned that to you, lying down in the upper room of a certain little house, it says. Now, in John 15, as you know, it's the upper room discourse, chapters 13 through 17. Chapter 15 is the central chapter of that upper room discourse.

And though we don't know where Polycarp got his name, but it certainly was an appropriate one, when you think of John 15. His name was a reminder to the bishop himself, also to his parishioners, that his purpose in life was to bear much fruit. Paulus Carpus, right? Paulus Carpus, much fruit.

His purpose was a missionary purpose, a missionary aim. Sometime before he got martyred, St. Polycarp wrote a long letter to the Philippians. The same people received the letter that St. Paul wrote his letter to.

At the very beginning of the letter, Polycarp makes clear that not only does he himself want to be a true Polycarp, he wants his parishioners to be Polycarps. He writes to them the following, he says, I've greatly rejoiced with you in our Lord Jesus Christ, because the strong root of your faith persists even until now, and brings forth fruit to our Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sins suffered even unto death. The reason for Polycarp's joy is the root of the Philippians' faith that has produced Paulus Carpus, much fruit.

Apparently the Philippians are like their priest, like their bishop. They are in the process of bearing much fruit. And so there's no greater joy for the old bishop than to see that they, his parishioners, are turning into Polycarps.

And you notice the parallel probably with chapter 15 of John's Gospel, right? Verse 5, 15 verse 5, Whoever abides in me, I in him, it is that bears much fruit, Paulus Carpus. By this my Father is glorified, this is verse 8, By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, Paulus Carpus, and prove to be my disciples. Now, I suppose that if we do a good historical exegesis of Polycarp, we can't be quite 100% sure whether Polycarp deliberately, in terms of authorial intent, is patterning who he is and what he is doing on John 15, but he was one of John's disciples, and it wouldn't have been out of place for him to have chosen as Episcopal identity this name from John's Gospel.

And also, I think it wouldn't have been out of place for the Church of Smyrna to have noted this remarkable fact, that Polycarp, much like Jesus himself, was in the upper room. I mean, it says that explicitly in the account of his martyrdom, right? That he was in the upper room in the days immediately before his martyrdom. And so there's a deep link, I think, that connects Polycarp to Jesus.

And that has to do with the overall theology, I think, of John chapter 15. And really with the entire Gospel's theology. I am the vine, says Jesus, you are the branches.

Whoever abides in me and I in him, it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. Those simple words, I think, are the reason, give us the deepest grounds, why it is that Polycarp's life is patterned on the life of Jesus. Or maybe I should put it this way, that Polycarp's life is not just patterned on that of Jesus, but participates in that of Jesus.

I am the vine, you are the branches, is the language. And those words make clear that when we sacrifice ourselves, indeed, in the Eucharist, when we offer ourselves up to God in the Eucharist, and similarly when Polycarp the bishop sacrificed himself to God and martyred him in the stadium, we're not doing

something on our own, by ourselves, doing our own thing, on our own strength. We're not just following Jesus as a far-off example.

Rather, we are in Christ, St. Paul's language, right? We're abiding in the vine, as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. That's the word abide. It just runs through this passage, I don't know how often, it runs all the way through, and it ties the entire passage together.

Menno, abide, remain. And we're clearly meant to take note. Our bearing fruit, your and my bearing fruit, depends on our abiding in Christ.

And what that means is that when Polycarp sacrifices himself in the stadium, when you and I sacrifice ourselves in church in the Eucharist, we're not doing something on our own, as individuals, by ourselves. We're in Christ. Let's go back to the language of the vine in the Old Testament for a moment to trace that.

Psalm 80, famous psalm, which is ultimately, I think, one of the main roots of this language. You cleared the ground for it. Sorry, you brought a vine out of Egypt, is the beginning that I should quote here, verse 9, 80, verse 9. You brought a vine out of Egypt, you drove out the nations and planted it.

You cleared the ground for it. It took deep root, filled the land. The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars with its branches.

It sent out its branches to the sea and its shoots to the river. What the psalmist is doing here in this psalm is he's telling the story of the Exodus, right? And he's saying, it's like God taking a vine and transplanting it from Egypt to the promised land. Clearly, Israel is the vine.

And it's an imagery that you find in numerous places in the Old Testament. In fact, there's one place, Jeremiah 2, 21, where Israel is called the true vine. Israel is the true vine.

So when Jesus says He is the true vine, He's saying nothing, doesn't He? I am the true Israel. I am the true Israel. So to join Christ and to join the Church is one and the same thing.

There's no difference. To join Christ, to join the Church, one and the same thing. The two are inseparable.

You can't belong to Christ by not belonging to the Church. Or vice versa. Bearing fruit is something you do in and through joining Jesus' ecclesial fellowship.

So it's no coincidence, it seems, that it's on the occasion where He institutes the Last Supper, institutes the Eucharist, rather, on the Last Supper, right? That Jesus is telling His disciples and that He's telling you and me to abide in the vine. And so Polycarp was undoubtedly aware that it's in the Upper Room, along with the Apostles that once united to Jesus. Think Acts chapter 2. Again, they're in the Upper Room.

The Apostles are mentioned by name, right? This is a Pentecostal event, to be sure, but it's also an apostolic event, right? The Apostles are front and center throughout the chapter. It is by eating the living bread, John chapter 6, it is by drinking the fruit of the vine, by drinking from the true vine, John chapter 15, that we're participating in Jesus and in His ecclesial fellowship. Greater love has no one than this, says Jesus in verse 13 of chapter 15.

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. It's about martyrdom, right? That someone lay down his life for his friends. He says that.

Jesus says that by way of explaining the story of the vine and the branches. And so His identity as the true vine implies, it calls to mind, sacrificial love. His own and by implication yours and mine.

That's the sacrificial love that Polycarp participates in when he too leaves the upper room to give his life for the church of Smyrna and for us. It's that same sacrificial love that you and I participate in when we celebrate the Eucharist. Truly, truly, I say to you, John chapter 12, right? I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and it dies, it remains alone.

But if it dies, it bears much fruit. If it dies, it bears much fruit. The fruit bearing of a Polycarp has to do with participating in the sacrificial martyrdom of Jesus.

And so Oskar Kuhlman, Lutheran theologian, Oskar Kuhlman observes that the relationship between branch and vine is above all, he says, the Eucharistic communion. It's above all else, the Eucharistic communion of believers with Christ. So whenever we celebrate the Eucharist, we become a polycarpic congregation, you could say.

A fruit bearing congregation. But offering ourselves up, participating in the very sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Now there are all kinds of ways to bear fruit, to be polycarpic.

Obviously, every fruit on the tree in some way preaches Christ. The fruit itself is a way of proclaiming the vines being alive. When we offer up money to the poor, we preach Christ.

When we give of ourselves in the soup kitchen, we preach Christ. When we offer a room, an apartment, to a poor person, we're preaching Christ. Even when we simply devote ourselves to our everyday job, such as visiting people in our congregation or preparing a son, we're preaching Christ.

It matters not in principle what it is, right? For each of those acts, we give something of ourselves. And what we do in the Eucharist is we bring all of these little sacrifices. We gather them up.

We bring them to church. And a couple of the members of our congregation bring them on our behalf to the front. And we offer our gifts.

The priest prays over them so that our sacrifice, so there are many sacrifices, you could say, come to participate in the one, true, once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And so our sacrifices aren't anymore just things that we've offered up ourselves, that we've done, for which we can have some sort of good boast. No, they've become the Body of Christ.

We sacrifice our lives in the sacrifice of Christ. And so it's in the Eucharist, in and through the Eucharist, that we abide in Christ. You see, something, I think, of this participation in Christ's sacrifice, you see Paul's letter to the Colossians.

When he writes there in 1 verse 24, famously difficult and awkward passage perhaps, Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake. And in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of the Body, that is the Church. Now that's awkward in at least two senses.

First of all, there is a rejoicing in suffering. Certainly our culture tells us suffering you do not rejoice in. That's one awkward thing in this passage.

And the other awkward thing is a more distinctly Christian question that we have, theological question that we have. And that is, how can there be things lacking in Christ's afflictions? Taurus teremata, I agree. How

can this be? Isn't that denying the once for all sufficiency of Christ's death? How do we deal with this? Well, let's first have a look at the joy in suffering.

Of course, it's not unique to Colossians 1.24. In many places, the Apostle expresses his joy in the midst of suffering. And his reason for joy doesn't lie in the fact that he has such a naturally happy disposition. With some difficulty, perhaps, you and I, or the Apostle Paul, might grin and bear suffering.

But we would not rejoice in it. So to grasp how it is that Paul can say, I rejoice in suffering, we need to briefly move into what I think is the historical backdrop to much of this verse. In the centuries prior to the birth of Christ, the Jewish people of God were forced to reflect on their suffering, their oppression by the nations around them.

How is it that while they were being faithful to Torah, serving God as best they could, nonetheless they were being oppressed? And were forced to suffer? Well, it's in that circumstance that they developed a martyrdom theology, you could say. A martyrdom theology. They came to the realization that it is through suffering, precisely, through suffering, that they were able to obtain a place in God's plan of redemption.

We find some of that in the fourth book of Maccabees, chapter 17, and I've written it out for you on the outline there. These then, having consecrated themselves for the sake of God, are now honored not only with this distinction, but also with the fact that through them our enemies did not prevail against our nation. Tyrant was punished, our land purified, since, this is the reason, since they became, as it were, a ransom for the sin of our nation.

These few people who suffered and died became a ransom for the sin of the nation. Through the blood of these righteous ones and through the propitiation of their death, the divine providence rescued Israel, which had been shamefully treated. So the Jewish martyrs came to regard themselves not just as enduring foreign oppression by way of punishment of God or so, or suffering injustice that was inflicted on them by their enemies, they came to see themselves as participating in the redemption of God's people.

They had a place within that redemption. Especially since Albert Schweitzer's well-known 1906 book on the historical Jesus. I'm not much of a historical Jesus fan, but today we're going to use Albert Schweitzer's 1906 book on the historical Jesus.

He talks there about the messianic woes, the messianic woes. He says they were, for the Jews of Jesus' time, they were the birth pains, you could say, the birth pains of the kingdom of God. They were a time of intense redemptive suffering that some individuals underwent on behalf of the entire nation.

So as to give birth to the kingdom of God. Without that suffering, the dawning of the age was not going to be possible. Why not? Because God's anger would remain on His people, so the Jewish people thought.

And so the martyrs are praying in chapter 6 of 4 Maccabees, Be merciful to your people, they say to God. Be merciful and let our punishment be a satisfaction on their behalf. Satisfaction on their behalf.

Very interesting language. Now, the early Jewish Christians interpreted Christ's messianic suffering in this light of these messianic woes, these messianic sufferings. The afflictions of Christ that Paul mentions in Colossians 1.24, the afflictions of Christ.

Can be understood against Old Testament and Jewish backdrop with an apocalyptic conception of a suffering at the very end of times that yields them, that gives them the kingdom of God. So when St. Paul

comments, he is rejoicing that in his flesh he's filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. He's rejoicing not because of the sufferings themselves, he's not masochistic here.

It's the Pauline notion of Christians being crucified with Christ, en Christo, right? With Christ. That's not an abstract idea. Instead what it is, it is a very concrete entry into the life, suffering and death of Jesus Christ himself.

And therefore gives rise to joy, a joyful willingness to suffer even to the point of, as in the case of Polycarp, sacrificial martyrdom in and with Christ. If you keep that in mind, it becomes at least somewhat understandable that Polycarp would want to pattern his actions on the actions of Christ in the upper room. He is participating in the very sufferings of Christ, filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

It's a very helpful book by Michael Gorman. Michael Gorman teaches in Baltimore, St. Mary's Seminary. He's a Protestant author teaching in a Catholic seminary.

It's a fascinating book called *Cruciformity*, Paul's narrative spirituality of the cross. It's a great, great theology of atonement. And what Michael Gorman does there is he explains that this pattern of cruciformity, which he says runs throughout St. Paul's writings, reaches beyond St. Paul to all Christian believers, which is why we see it at work in Polycarp.

So the overall story of Paulian theology, he says, is an ongoing pattern of living in Christ. And an ongoing pattern also of dying with Him, which produces then what he calls a cruciform existence, a cruciform existence. Indwelling Him, being indwelt by Him, living with and for and according to Him in the resolve of Christ and by His life and death.

Again, therefore, it's not just that we pattern ourselves on Christ, that Christ is an example to us, a far-off example. Christ is an example to be sure, and we imitate Him in discipleship to be sure. But this kind of imitation is an imitation, not just as human imitation.

Gorman puts it this way, he writes, cruciformity misunderstood as human imitation of Christ, and he means by that, mere imitation. If it's mere imitation, that's indeed, he says, an impossibility. You and I could not possibly get the courage to do what Polycarp does unless something extraordinary is going on.

And so he writes, however, cruciformity is the initial and ongoing work of Christ Himself by His Spirit sent by God, who dwells within each believer and believing community, shaping them to carry on the story. Now that last point is crucial, especially as we're moving in this talk toward the Eucharist, toward the theology of the Eucharist. This last point is crucial because according to Gorman, our cruciform lives are lives that are not separate from the life and death of Jesus Christ.

In some mysterious sense, and I'm purposely using that term, in some mysterious sense, your and my self-sacrificing participates in the sacrifice of Christ. It would have to be that way, for imagine if it were not that way. What we would end up with is two sacrifices, right? We would end up with a sacrifice that is Christ's, and then other many sacrifices, your and mine.

And there's at least two problems, if there's more, you can help me out, but there's at least two problems with that that I can see. And one is, it will be denial of the all-sufficiency, the once-for-all character of the sacrifice of Christ. It's half a box, as we keep hearing time and time again.

Once-for-all, time and time again, give it up to the Hebrews, right? The second problem, if we were to separate our many sacrifices from Christ's one sacrifice, is that, well, what is Christ doing in this picture? Why is He offering only His own sacrifice? It would mean that you and I, on our own, sacrifice all of the other sacrifices, by ourselves. It's pretty hard to avoid a Pelagian kind of pull-yourself-up-by-your-own-bootstraps type of theology, if our sacrifices are separate from that of Christ. Yet, we are called upon to sacrifice ourselves.

The language runs throughout the New Testament, and I've given a couple of samples here. In 1 Peter 2, 5, we are like living stones that are built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ. Romans 12, verse 1, famous verse, right? To present our bodies as a living sacrifice, is spiritual worship.

Philippians 2, verse 17, Even if I am to be poured out as a drink-offering on the sacrificial offering of your faith, a combination of sacrifices, right? If I am to be poured out on your sacrificial offering, your faith, I'm glad and I rejoice with you all. These are Philippians, right? Great epistle of joy. I rejoice if I'm dying, if I have to suffer martyrdom on your faith, I'll gladly do so, says St. Paul.

Now the reason why it is that none of these sacrifices of these various Biblical passages, why none of these add a second new sacrifice to that of Christ, and the reason too why you and I don't offer them up in our own strength, is quite simply, there's only one sacrifice, in some sense. There's only one sacrifice, and that is that of Jesus Christ. He sacrifices Himself.

And what we do, in offering up our lives, and what we do when we come to the Eucharistic altar, is we participate in the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And so we don't proclaim ourselves there. We're not proclaiming ourselves.

We are proclaiming Christ. Christ has died. Christ has risen.

Christ will come again. I suspect one reason why many churches have done away with a sacramental view of the Eucharist, is that people are nervous that we might be offering up something to God in the Eucharist ourselves. Now that's not a bad nervousness to have, to be sure.

It's not a bad nervousness to have. Because, as I said, if there are two sacrifices, separate, distinct sacrifices, one in Golgotha, one in the church, we have a serious problem. We have a serious problem.

And in many ways, when you read Luther, or when you read Calvin, that's the problem they're struggling with. So Luther, for example, I'll give you a couple of quotations here. He claims, We know and have no other sacrifice than that which Christ made on the cross on which He died once for all.

Christ, he writes, Christ has sacrificed Himself once. Henceforth He will not be sacrificed by anyone else. Now, in some sense, that's very true.

And again, it hearkens back to a nervousness that clearly Luther expresses here about adding a new sacrifice to the sacrifice of Christ. Calvin does much the same thing. He asks rhetorically, Are we allowed daily to sow innumerable patches upon such a sacrifice, namely that of Christ, as if it were imperfect, when He has so clearly commanded its perfection? How could you add anything to the perfection of Christ? Sacrifice is what he's asking.

When God's sacred word not only affirms but cries out and contends that this sacrifice was performed once, and all its force remains forever, do not those, and you may guess who those are, do not those who require another sacrifice accuse it of imperfection and weakness? You know what he's doing, right? He's rhetorically asking those papists, what they're doing is they're adding another sacrifice, an additional one to the one true sacrifice offered by Jesus Christ. It's not a bad nervousness to have, frankly. And, I would add to it, there's a great deal to suggest actually that in connection with developments in the late Middle Ages, that many people did look at the Eucharistic sacrifice in such a way that makes the Reformation reaction understandable.

However, however, the way in which Luther and Calvin depict Eucharistic sacrifice as an additional sacrifice is, in the light of everything that we've seen so far, perhaps not the only way to look at what it is that we're doing when we're sacrificing ourselves in Christ in the Eucharist. It's striking, it seems to me, it's striking that the early Church unanimously, without exception, regarded the Eucharist as sacrificial in character. Is there as early as the Didache in the very beginning of the second century at the latest? Is there a Clement? Is there an Justin? Irenaeus? Hippolytus? It runs throughout the tradition from the very earliest evidence that we have.

In fact, one liturgical scholar, Gregory Dix, writes there's no exception whatever in any Christian tradition in the second century. No hint of an alternative understanding anywhere. That's Gregory Dix.

Now that unanimity struck me perhaps for the first time when I read a beautiful book, some of you know, by Jean-Marie Rouget-Atillard, *Flesh of the Church, Flesh of Christ*, it's called. A small book, a very accessible book by an ecumenical Roman Catholic scholar. Atillard shows in that book passage after passage from theologians both East and West that they were convinced, these theologians, East and West, were convinced that in the Eucharistic celebration we are offering on the sacrificial altar our lives.

We're offering there the lives of mercy that we have lived in the preceding week. We bring it to the altar. And so for St. John Chrysostom, for example, in the fourth century, it's important that our lives of mercy, and he's all about lives of mercy, Chrysostom, that they be in harmony with the sacrifice that we offer up in the Church.

They can't be out of sync with each other. Because the sacrifice that we offer when we take care of the poor is the very same sacrifice that we bring to the Church on Sunday morning. And so he talks about the poor like an altar.

They are the altar, he says. He makes the following comment. You have the quotation in front of you there.

This altar, the altar of the poor, is made of Christ's members. They're part of the body, right? They have Christ's body. They're members of the body.

The altar of the poor is made of Christ's members themselves. The body of the Lord becomes your altar. Venerate it.

Venerate the altar, he says. You sacrifice the victim on the flesh of the Lord, the poor that is, right? This altar of the poor is more awesome than the one that we use in Church. Not just more than the one used in ancient times in the Old Testament.

No, don't object, he says. You can hear him preaching, right? Don't object. This altar in Church is awesome because of the sacrifice laid upon it.

That, the one made of alms, when we take care of the poor, is even more so, not just because of the alms, but because it is the very sacrifice that makes the other, the one in Church, awesome. This one offered on the poor is the one that makes the other one awesome. Now, it also goes the other way around, right? If this one's not very awesome, there's all sorts of questions about our sacrifice in Church.

So, the acts of mercy, our daily acts of mercy for St. John Chrysostom, they give, or they make up, the beauty and weight of our Eucharistic sacrifice. That's the East, right? Chrysostom. In the West, St. Augustine.

No different. He talks at one point about Romans 12, verse 1, the verse I already mentioned earlier, present your bodies as a living sacrifice, he says, right? And then he talks, as you know, Romans 12 goes on to talk about all the gifts in the congregation and so on, and he goes on to talk about those gifts that we have in the congregation. And he writes the following, this is the sacrifice of Christians.

We being many are one body of Christ. He's talking Romans 12, clearly, right? We are the one body of Christ, he says. And this is also the sacrifice that the Church continually celebrates in the sacrament of the altar, known to the faithful, in which the Church teaches that it itself is offered in the offering it makes to God.

This is what St. Augustine writes, right? So, because he says you have your gifts, and you offer them up, he immediately makes the link with what happens on Sunday morning. He says, that sacrifice that you offer up in using your gifts, that's what you celebrate on Sunday morning. Because you are offering that on the altar on Sunday morning.

You're offering up yourself. You're doing a polycarpic thing. You're like St. Polycarp, offering yourself up.

So let's go back once more, and after that we'll shortly wrap up, and then we'll have some questions, some Q&A. Turn back once more to 1 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 26, right? We proclaim the Lord's death until He comes, says St. Paul there. It's not just the words that we say in the memorial acclamation, Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again.

It's not just these words that proclaim Jesus Christ. Of course they do, but it's not just that. It's also not just that the priest takes Christ's own words in his mouth, when he says, this is my body, which is for you, do this in remembrance of me.

This new covenant in my blood, do this in remembrance of me. As often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. Not just those words that proclaim the Lord's death.

In addition to those words, both of the faithful and of the clergy, in addition, it is the very act of eating the bread, the very act of drinking the wine cup that will proclaim the Lord's death. In the Eucharistic celebration we are offering up our lives in Jesus Christ. We sacrifice ourselves in Him.

In doing that, bringing all of that sacrifice in Christ to the altar, we're proclaiming Him. The implications of that, I think, are huge. I don't just mean for Eucharistic theology, though I think there are implications for Eucharistic theology that are really quite important.

But, I'm thinking here of the situation in Corinth and the implication of all of that for our own churches. As you know, the situation in Corinth was not the best one. There's a Eucharistic celebration in the context probably of a love feast that's being celebrated and we know that the rich are helping themselves, they're having a hog fest, and the poor are having nothing.

That's the context. And so, what St. Paul says in this context is, it is not the Lord's Supper that you're celebrating. And he's pretty unequivocal about that.

It's like St. Christopher's preaching, right? When you're doing that, or rather you refuse to do that with the poor, you refuse to care for them. Don't think that this is going to make up for it. That's essentially what he's saying.

What, he says, do you not have houses, eats and drinking? So they turn the Eucharistic sacrifice into the very opposite of what it is meant to be. It's meant to be a feast of self-giving, of self-sacrifice. Then it turns into something from which to take.

Now, immediately after he has, in this way, denounced the ongoing, the terrible ongoing in Corinth, the Apostle then gives the words of execution. Verses 24 and 25. This is my body, which is for you, this cup is the new covenant in my blood.

And at that same point, he says in verse 26, as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. The problem with the Corinthians lies in the proclamation part, you could say. Right? They are proclaiming not the Lord's death.

They are proclaiming themselves. And that is why St. Paul insists it's not the Lord's supper that you're celebrating. Of course it's not the Lord's supper, it's their own supper they're celebrating.

It's not the Lord's supper. And so they're eating and drinking in an unworthy manner. We're invariably proclaiming something when we come to the table.

Invariably. The question is, what is it that we're proclaiming? We either proclaim Christ or we're proclaiming ourselves. It's a pretty stark choice.

Well, there's no doubt about Polycarp, when he sacrificed himself in the stadium, he was proclaiming Christ in his Eucharistic sacrifice. The reason is simple. Right? With every fiber of his being, he was sharing in Christ.

He was participating in the sacrifice. In the martyrdom sacrifice of Jesus Christ. So every thought he thought, every word he spoke, everything he did, was participating in the life and death of Jesus.

And so when we come to the altar, the question for you and me is, am I giving myself here in Christ, on the altar, in sacrifice? Am I participating in Christ's sacrifice, which is being sacrificed here? Or, am I proclaiming my own my own worth, my own abilities, my own gifts, my own whatever I have? Am I proclaiming myself, or am I proclaiming Christ? Our lives are meant to be polycarpic, fruit-bearing. Now that may, or may not, mean sacrificial martyrdom. So I don't want us to write that one off too quickly.

And I'm purposely saying that because it seems to me that in our societal context, you and I increasingly need to be prepared for that. We need to be ready as Christians to do whatever we must do to proclaim not ourselves, but our Lord who has sacrificed himself for us. But whatever our sacrifice looks like, when

we come to the table, when we come to the altar, one thing is clear.

We are called upon to proclaim only the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and to participate in the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And when we do that, we are proclaiming Jesus Christ. All right, friends.

We have half an hour. I have exactly half an hour, actually. I need to leave immediately at 1230 because I need to go to Vancouver.

I need to teach this afternoon. But we do have half an hour. Any questions, comments, thoughts? Feel free, Jeff.

I love what you're saying. Very much processing this, but I'm trying to figure out how, in a sense, the way we practice it is making this clear. Because we kind of see, in a sense, I'm thinking it tends us towards reenacting the sacrifice of Christ, and I'm just trying to understand, you're essentially saying that this somehow is bringing all our daily sacrifices of obedience in that, are we making that clear enough? Are we needing something? I'm just, it's new, what you're saying to me.

And I'm trying to take what you're saying and think what the liturgy says and see how this is kind of connected. Yeah, thank you for that. Great question.

You did read T.R.'s book, of course. I did, in class. I'm not going to read it again.

So, the disclaimer, it's new to me. I'm sorry. I'll take it with a slight grain of salt here.

I'll take it with a grain. But I appreciate the invitation to say a bit more about that. I'm a slow learner.

So, that's great. Thank you. There's two dangers here.

There's two dangers here. One is, and that's the one I've highlighted in the talk, and that is the danger of having an additional separate sacrifice in addition to that of Christ. And you're wondering whether we're doing enough to shy away from that danger.

Now, certainly we need to shy away from that danger. And the reason why Luther and Calvin wrote what they wrote is precisely because in the late Middle Ages in the Via Moderna, the modern way as it was known, there was a lot of theology that was going on and a lot of practicing of the Eucharist that didn't just make it look like, but that often seemed like, and by some theologians was intended like there was something additional going on. A way of a covenant obligation on our part that we now enact in response to.

That's true. It's a danger. But before I say something about that, I just want to switch to the other danger.

And that is if we don't take seriously that what we're doing in the Eucharist is engaging in a sacrificial act. It's also a danger to say what we're doing here is just remembering what happened a long time ago. It's a memorial thing.

Well, it is a memorial thing. But we're not just remembering what Christ did long ago. We're not just remembering a sacrifice that was offered 2,000 years ago, period.

What the Incarnation does, what God does in and through the Incarnation is open up His divine life and therefore by opening up His divine life so that we may enter in, He draws all of human time, as it were, into

the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ. So that time itself gets reconfigured, He could say, in and through Jesus Christ. That's important, it seems to me.

Because otherwise we'll always have a gap between what Christ did long ago and what you and I do today. And the outcome of that actually is as serious as the danger to which you're alluding. The reason for that is if there's a separation between what happened 2,000 years ago and what happens today on Sunday morning is you and I are now doing our own thing.

We are somehow managing our Christian life by recollecting, by remembering in our mind something that happened long ago. But St. Paul's understanding defining the branches goes way beyond that. It is an actual participation.

It is an actual sharing in Christ. It's union with Christ. And so I think we need the sacrificial language with the New Testament, which uses it often.

There's always a sacrifice in Christ for Paul. There's always a sacrifice in Christ. And so you're right to ask the question, but should we make sure somehow liturgically and in our teaching that it is a sacrifice in Christ? Absolutely.

I would just say that the liturgy does that. The very memorial acclamation right before we go up to the table, before we go up to the altar, we're proclaiming what? We're proclaiming Christ. Christ has died.

Christ will come again. Now, is there a danger that we focus on a localized presence of Christ? That we draw Christ, as it were, to ourselves and that we lay claim upon Him as if we could control Him in a local sense? Yeah, it's always a danger. It's always a danger.

But frankly, I wonder to what extent we're guilty of that ourselves sometimes. When we're talking about Catholic theology as implying a re-sacrificing of Jesus Christ, if the faithful in church constantly hear of the danger of re-sacrificing Jesus Christ, what they will do as a result is they will associate sacrifice in church with re-sacrifice. But there's really no reason for that.

There is inherently really no reason for that. Surely a re-sacrifice as a new thing is a problem. But, we're talking about sacrificing ourselves all the time in daily life.

And nobody ever thinks of well, this is this is meriting your own salvation or you're not doing something in addition to what Jesus Christ did for you. Nobody's thinking that. Why not? Because we're in our minds not associating it with those awful teachings of those people out there.

And so only we recognize that on a Biblical traditional understanding of a Eucharistic sacrifice there is no re-sacrifice. And my hunch is frankly when you're talking to Catholics, our Catholic brothers and sisters do not talk about re-sacrificing Jesus Christ. It is a participation also for them in the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

So, is it a danger? Is it a possibility? And has it sometimes happened historically? Yes, yes, yes. Is it necessary? Absolutely not. There's three or four questions here.

The gentleman in the middle there. Yes, please. Thomas Watson talks about faith bringing its lips to the orifice of Christ's wounds and sucking the everlasting sweetness of salvation.

And I wonder how you might articulate this aspect of bringing our sacrifices to Christ's sacrifice with that instrumental efficacy of the Lord's Supper. So some of the Puritans talk about the word in sacrament being the two breasts of the Church. The two breasts of the Church.

And that we are nursed upon in sacrament. So there is this idea that we bring but it also it proclaims our bankruptcy from which we are sucking the sweetness of salvation. That's beautiful.

I love Thomas Watson. I just did some stuff on the beatific vision. And Thomas Watson is all over that, on the beatific vision and ties it for him with allegorical exegesis.

Thomas Watson is often a marvellous spiritual theologian and also a marvellous interpreter of scripture in that he reads allegorically. And he does that in the very examples that you give where there's two instances of spiritual or allegorical exegesis. First of all, by the cross.

Where we are drinking from the side of Christ. The blood and the water flow. And so we are drinking the sweetness from Jesus' wounds.

And this is the Eucharist. Throughout the tradition, long before Thomas Watson throughout the tradition this is a metaphor for the Eucharist. And the second thing, the two breasts, and he takes this from the Song of Songs.

At the very beginning of the Song of Songs because it talks there about the breasts of the groom. And what it does is it presupposes a reading of the Song of Songs that's Christological. It presupposes that Christ is the groom and we, or my soul, however exactly I understand that, but somehow we are bride.

And so Thomas Watson knows, and many other Puritans do too, he knows that to read scripture is to read it Christologically. And that implies the need for allegory. Many could go on about allegory for a long time, but I won't.

So he's all on to that. And so I think you're quite right, there is an instrumental efficacy, you could say, to use his terms, or to use the language of many of the Reformation Confessions, it's a means of grace, instrumental efficacy, in which and through which Christ allows us to share in himself, to participate in himself. So he gives of himself in his sacrifice.

We participate as the bride in that very same sacrifice. And so what are we doing? But, to use the imagery of Song of Songs, we are drinking from the breast of Christ. Does that help somewhat? It does, yeah.

It seems to me that there's two different kinds of things going on. Reception, just sheer reception in our bankruptcy versus coming to him and offering a sacrifice of our own. I see what you mean.

Yeah, sorry, thank you for that. I probably differ somewhat on that score from Thomas Watson. The reason I differ, or the way in which I differ from Thomas Watson is not in that, I would say, we do have to add something of our own, right? I'm not claiming that.

But, when God justifies us in Christ, he renews us, he makes us new. Our very virtue, I've learned a lot from Gregory of Nyssa, another allegorical exegesis from the 4th century, right? For Gregory of Nyssa, our, the beginning of our virtues, small v virtues, are in participating in Christ who is, capital V, virtue for Gregory of Nyssa. He is goodness itself.

He is virtue. And, when God justifies us, he doesn't leave us empty-handed. He actually fills our hands and he allows us, really, to participate in Christ.

So, what makes me nervous sometimes with the Puritans, frankly, is, and with Calvinism in general, what makes me nervous about it is that it puts everything in Christ and nothing in us. And, I think the biblical picture actually is that everything is in Christ 100%. And that Christ draws us evermore, also through a change in life, into him.

Now, in some sense it remains true that we become empty-handed. In the sense that we bring nothing of our own by ourselves. And that's why I hammered away at this, you know, this is not to be construed in a blatant sense.

And Thomas Watson is right to caution. Let's not get this wrong. It's not about bringing ourselves to the table.

It's bringing ourselves in Christ to the table. But there is a real virtue that comes. The real alms do come to the table for Christists.

Right. So, it's within the Unio Christi that I think that dilemma of empty-handed or human, our own, very own merit that we have conjured up naturally by ourselves. That dilemma falls away.

First question here, then in the back. I'm trying to digest what you have taught us. And I'm thinking more of a practical way.

I'm thinking of how the sacrament if a non-believer or if you bring somebody to church on a Sunday. We know that we are participating and we are proclaiming Christ. But in the act of the sacrament, how can this be revealed to somebody who we invite to church to tell them that we are proclaiming Christ? All they see is just some action.

So, great question. So, how does this relate to missionary, quote-unquote, outreach beyond the liturgical celebration of the church? In several ways. First of all, remember what Chrysostom says about almsgiving.

So, by the time we go to church on Sunday morning, we're entering in our eternal rest. That's what the liturgy is. The liturgy is the time and place of the eighth day.

That's how the tradition typically calls it. This is the eighth day celebration. We're now in the heavenly places with Christ Jesus.

And that is to say everything else has already happened. So, throughout the week, the seven days, if we have lived in union with Christ, we have been proclaiming Him in all sorts of ways. We have sacrificed our lives in all sorts of ways, if we have lived well.

That's the seven days of our life. That's not what the Sunday morning worship service is about. Sunday morning worship service is not, we're not trying to be secret sensitive there.

It's not a time and place to, quote-unquote, reach out to others. What this is, is this is the sacramental reality. So, we've had the sacramentum, the sacramental way of living all of our lives for the seven days of the week, right? And now, we're joining angels and archangels, we're joining the Son of God at the right hand of the Father, and we're celebrating the day of rest.

No more activity, no more frenetic business, busyness. We're resting and we're celebrating, we're drinking the wine new with Christ in eternity. Read Edith Humphrey.

Read Edith Humphrey's book, I forget what it's called, but on what it is that we do in what we often call worship in the liturgical celebration. We're entering. Christ brings us, Christ takes us into His very own presence.

Here we meet Him, quote-unquote, face-to-face. That's what the Sunday morning worship service is about. So, it's great you bring your friend with you.

But remember, your friend may be there in church, but your friend is not celebrating the Eucharist with you. And the reason is, your friend is not a baptized Christian. And so, you are, while you're in the presence of Jesus Christ in the heavenly places, you are praying for your friend.

And as you're going to the Eucharist and sacrificing everything that you have in the Eucharist and offering your life before God in the Eucharist, you're praying for your friend. But we should not confuse, it seems to me, the seven days of our daily life with the eighth day where that type of missionary activity is being left behind. I hope that's of some help.

There's a question way at the back, and there are also some here, some people that I should not skip. Going back to the discussion of sacramental participation, I guess my question is just more talking about how do you resist that temptation wanting to add to Christ's sacrifice in some sort of way, even in our participation, to properly value, offering those two polar positions, but just trying to resist that temptation, further adding to the sacrifice that Christ has offered. Yeah.

First thing, that's a great question, thank you. First thing probably to say is what it does not mean is, let's just not do anything, because Christ has already done everything, and so what we do really doesn't matter. No, because Christ has done everything already, what we now do really matters, because now we want to participate in Him.

So it means that in some ways we're very busy, frankly. And there's nothing wrong with that. We really do want to reach out.

We really do want to give everything that we have and are in our daily lives and whatever it is that God may call us to. So we should not have, I think, a dilemma where we say, well, because Christ has done everything, therefore whatever I do doesn't matter. No, therefore whatever you do, what I do profoundly matters now.

The one other thing I think that I want to add to it is when we do whatever it is that we do in our daily lives prayerfully, when we begin our day with prayer, when we end our day with prayer, and when we do what we do before Christ, therefore, in the face of Christ, the question of Pelagianism really should not, should not even arise. Is it possible to say, but I'm going to do this on my own strength? Well, yes. When you neglect your prayer, you're giving evidence of the fact that that is what you're doing.

But in terms of your daily activities, you're praying to God for strength, you're asking for the Spirit's guidance, you're relying on what Christ has done. Is there the temptation of saying, I'm going to do it, I'm going to do it? Sure there is, sure there is. But, I guess I'm more nervous about saying, well, everything's been done, what we do no longer matters.

And I would just say, it really does. There was a question right in the middle there. I just want to call to Jeff the first question when he spoke.

I think the post, the traditional post English Reformation Eucharistic prayer addresses both aspects beautifully. It starts off that it's one perfect sufficient appreciation of oblation, sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. But then later, we offer ourselves, our souls, and our bodies to be a living and holy sacrifice.

And so those two elements are brought together beautifully. And I guess I never realized when those who have been working on the Eucharistic prayer for the 2019 book to come out for ACNA, because that Eucharistic prayer was particularly long for Canadians because it was based on the American 28th prayer. Certain paragraphs could be left out to abbreviate it, but one that could not be left out was offering ourselves, our souls, and our bodies.

But my question is that you had mentioned it's not just do this in remembrance of me. It's far more, it's a petition, a participation, even now, of the one sacrifice that is offered. But is it do this in remembrance of me exactly it? Remembrance is end of pieces, right? I didn't want to get into all that, but yes, you're exactly right.

You're exactly right. I talked to that context memorial and I meant it in terms of the way that memorialist traditions typically understand this verse. But you're quite right.

Memory is identification with. Think of Augustine's understanding of memory in very much a Christian Platonist understanding of that, that we recollect and therefore genuinely recollect, gather back again that which was in the past, that which was past now becomes present. So I very much would echo what you're saying.

In the standard meal where they speak in the present tense, why is this night? We did anonymity, yeah. Absolutely, thank you. Way in the back.

I wouldn't deny the sacrifice of Christ and I think it's a very helpful report to offer yourselves. The step that I kept quite caught in is why do you conflate the two? Why our sacrifice has to be part of what I think is the Reformation we see as Christ's unique Christatory sacrifice. For some reason you want to put all of our daily offering into that sacrifice which I don't agree with.

I missed the step and I'm curious. Yes. The basic reason for that is that all of our lives, our lives live in Christ.

And so there is nothing that we do that lies outside of Jesus Christ. And so the vine and the branches metaphor in chapter 15 leads Jesus to explain in that chapter that we give our lives, we offer our lives for our friends. And so when we remain in Him, we are offering our lives for our friends as He Himself is offering His life for His friends.

So martyrdom, self-sacrifice, in my understanding at least, is never something that we do apart from Jesus Christ. It cannot possibly be apart from Jesus Christ because if it were, I think it would indeed be a blatant self-sacrifice. So certainly that's true.

I still don't see why, because we are in Christ, but that does not mean every activity of Christ becomes our activity, right? It means that whatever we do, we do by way of participating, I think, in His sacrifice. His entire life is a life lived by way of offering Himself up to God. Yes, but He has unique properties and unique

activities, and to sort of put all of us into those unique activities and realities seems to be a step too far.

And, sorry, one more thing. Because you keep referring to the liturgy as saying that Jesus Christ... That's what? You do. Several times you've said we say this in the liturgy, so that's your point.

But what liturgy are you referring to? Because I think most people here would see the Book of Common Prayer as a standard but I don't, I wouldn't reconcile your teaching with the Book of Common Prayer. Okay. That's what I'm referring to, yes.

Any other questions? Yes? Hans, thanks very much for this morning. Are you, in your last comment to Ruth here about mission and evangelism in the context of communion service, are you asking us to consider possibly a different definition of proclamation where we no longer, because proclamation we often think of gospel proclamation as the proclaiming of salvation in Jesus Christ alone to the unbeliever and then also to the believer. But when we think about evangelism and gospel proclamation, now you're talking about communion, Eucharist as proclamation, but not primarily to the unbeliever, but as a sacrifice of praise in the community of faith.

Is that asking us then to kind of correct, maybe you think correct a misunderstanding of proclamation or add another understanding of proclamation? I don't think it adds another dimension to it. It's not correcting it in the sense that we're not supposed to be missionary agents in God's world in a very direct sense of preaching the gospel. Yeah.

But what I am saying is that in our very acts we're also proclaiming. So activity too can be proclamation as long as it is not self-referential, as long as it doesn't refer to our own accomplishments, but as long as it is Christologically. Yeah.

And then can you just for a moment, let's flip it around and say rather than, as you put it table as word, is there something in what you're trying to show us in the relationship between preaching a sacrament that goes the other way? That in the act of celebrating the Eucharist we're proclaiming that actually we have something to learn about how we should be preaching from how we do the sacrament. Do you understand my question? Going backwards from, you started with word as table, table as word, sorry. Is there a way to go backwards from into how it should affect our preaching? I haven't, I'm not quite sure that I follow your question.

Is our preaching, do we preach in this way, participating in Christ? Yeah, yeah, right. I can't judge that whether you or others preach in a participatory manner. But it's a topic that is actually very dear to my heart.

And to my understanding preaching must always be preaching of Jesus Christ. And it must always be about our sharing in Jesus Christ, our participating in Jesus Christ. So there's never, in my understanding, a move from the text, say, to the lives of the believer where we apply it later on.

I don't believe in application as such. So our lives rather are included in Jesus Christ. And so when we preach the Song of Songs, we're preaching Jesus Christ.

Whatever passage it is, we're always preaching the contents, the deepest reality of that passage, because the passage is a sacramental mystery that contains Jesus Christ. And you and I participate in that, it seems to me. So exegesis, proclamation based on proper exegesis, it's not simply trying to find out what the author meant, but it's always asking, where is Jesus here? So how can I bring Jesus to the

congregation? And how can I show that they, people in the pew, the faithful in the church, that they participate in this narrative? And that they participate in this event of Jesus Christ? Does that help someone? One more question, and I'm afraid that after that, I'm going to pick somebody else actually if you don't mind, but after that I'm going to have to go, and I do have to move right away.

So there's a question right there. Yes, please. Thank you so much, it's been very helpful.

You comment concerning the body, right? So the body, to discern the body, which is typically modern and common, right? To discern the body is this local discernment of the body goes to the poor who are in Christ, and they weren't discerning then. And then some of them are sick. And so I guess my question here, could you comment more about discerning the body in our local churches? Because here's the neat thing, I don't think any of our priests are denying poor people who are like the bread and the wine.

But maybe we're not discerning the body, if you know what I'm saying. And then the implications of that with the sickness passages, like that, some of you are sick and this and that, because they're not doing it in a worthy manner. So could you comment on that? Yeah, that's a great question.

First, discerning the body, there's disagreement among exegetes about whether that is a reference to Christ's body, this is the historical body of Christ, you're not discerning Christ himself, or does it talk about the Church? And regardless of where you see the weight of St. Paul's words there, I think, based on the verses 16 and 17 of that chapter, of chapter 10 rather, is that these are two different aspects of one and the same body. So certainly there are implications for ecclesiology there, regardless of your reading of particularly what discerning the body means. But there are ecclesial implications.

And on a modern anthropology, modern understanding of who we are, we're fragmented individuals. And so what we think and what we do as individuals has no bearing on our being constituted as a body, on our ecclesial being together. But I think one of the implications at the very least of what St. Paul writes about some of you who are being sick and so on, one of the implications at least is that for St. Paul, our identity is constituted in Christ.

We are who we are by, because of the aim or the telos of our human existence in Christ. We're most truly ourselves in the new humanity, that is Jesus Christ. If that is true, if we break that down, there are consequences.

There are down-to-earth consequences, and St. Paul is pointing those out. Now we're way too modern to figure that this might be a possibility, right? Because we can only think in terms of this worldly cause and effect. But for St. Paul, nature and the supernatural are much more closely linked.

And in that regard, we might just want to be a bit more Pentecostal. Thank you.

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