

Lord's Supper: Preparatory Form A

RCNZ

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Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, listen to the words of the institution of the Lord's Supper as they have been handed down by the apostle Paul:

“For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognising the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.”¹

In obedience to these words, and in fellowship with the church universal, we shall commemorate the death of our Saviour in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper on the coming Lord's Day. However, to do so to our spiritual benefit we must first examine ourselves as the apostle has admonished.

Let each of us consider our sin and guilt. God's wrath against sin is so great that he has punished it in the bitter and shameful death of his beloved Son. Let each of us, therefore, examine whether our hearts are filled with the godly sorrow that brings repentance leading to salvation.²

Let us search our hearts to see whether we truly believe in Jesus Christ as our only saviour, and accept the gracious promise of God that through the death of Jesus all our sins are now forgiven, and we are clothed with the perfect righteousness of the Son of God.

Finally, let us examine our consciences to see whether we are committed to serve Jesus Christ as Lord, and in all things to live by his commandment: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind ... and ... your neighbour as yourself.”³

As we examine ourselves in this way, let us be assured that God graciously receives and welcomes to the table of his Son all who walk in this repentance and faith.

However, any who are still unrepentant or unbelieving eat and drink judgment to themselves if they partake.⁴ The Lord warns them through his apostle to abstain from this holy supper. As long as they wilfully continue in their sins they have no part in the kingdom of God.

However, this solemn warning is not intended to discourage the contrite hearts of believers, for we do not come to the supper on our own merit. On the contrary, we come testifying that we seek our salvation in Jesus Christ. By this testimony, we humbly confess that we are sinners and worthy of death. But we also confess that we believe the sure promise of God: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”⁵ This promise assures us that no sin or weakness which still remains in us against our will can hinder us from being received by God in grace and accounted worthy partakers of his heavenly food and drink.

With this assurance, let us come to the sacramental feast with a quiet conscience and a heart filled with faith, proclaiming the Lord’s death until he comes again.

Prayer

Let us turn to God in prayer:

Almighty God, our Father, by whose law all men are tried and by whose gospel we have hope, we look to you for aid.

Help us examine ourselves in the light of your law and give us hope through the gospel of Christ. You know our misery and weakness; have mercy and compassion upon us. Enable each of us, in the light of your holy Word, to search our hearts and acknowledge our sin. Help us also to see the fruit of your gracious work in our lives. Strengthen us by your Holy Spirit, so that we may live in sincere repentance and true faith.

We are thankful that you welcome us to the table of your Son. Graciously remove whatever may prevent our coming to the table. Let no love of sin or untruth, no pride or lust, no hatred or envy, no remnant of unbelief remain in us to hinder our glad response as we remember the atoning death of our Saviour.

Hear us, we pray, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

¹ 1 Corinthians 11:23–29.

² 2 Corinthians 7:10.

³ Matthew 22:37, 39.

⁴ The reading of the following explanatory statement is optional:

... such as all who trust in any form of superstition; all who honour images or pray to saints; all who despise God's Word or the holy sacraments; all who take God's name in vain; all who desecrate the Lord's Day; all who are disobedient to those in authority over them; all drunkards, gamblers, murderers, thieves, adulterers, liars and unchaste persons.

⁵ 1 John 1:9.