

Hy 4:1,2,3
 Ps 99:1,5,6
 Ps 38:1,2,8,10
 Ps 34:6,7
 Ps 130:2,4
 Hebrews 9:23-28
 Isaiah 6:1-8
 Lord's Day 30

Yarrow, August 22, 2010

Beloved Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Next Sunday we will, under the blessing of the Lord, celebrate the Lord's Supper. 'Lord's Supper', that sacrament is called, and we recall from last week that the content of this sacrament is so incredibly and delightfully rich. This sacrament is the *Lord's* supper, that is, the supper of the Lord of lords, Him who is enthroned over all the world as King of kings. The Almighty: He from His seat at God's right hand spreads a table on this earth, and invites, nay, commands you and me to eat there with Him! And eating together: that's what you do with family and friends. Inviting another, commanding another to eat with you is to say that you consider him good company for you. He –Lord of lords– commands us – sinners!– to His table, and that's to say that He wants us in His presence, and He is pleased to be in our presence! It's so wonderfully rich! And therefore so encouraging as we live in today's evil world. Comfort indeed.

Such encouragement, such comfort for God's people, is precisely what the devil does not want. So what does the devil do? *He seeks to destroy the rich gospel embodied in the sacrament.* In our Lord's Day today the church makes confession about two efforts of the devil to disembowel this sacrament of its wealth. The first effort focuses on events that took place long ago – and serve to illustrate the fact that Satan attempts to rob God's people of comfort. That's Question & Answer 80. The second is a very contemporary attack on the Lord's table. That's Question & Answer 81 & 82. That second attack compels us to self-examination. In as much as we hope to sit at the table next week, it is appropriate that we consider Lord's Day 30 today, before the celebration. I hope to come back to Lord's Day 29 the week following, on the Sunday of Lord's Supper.

I summarise the sermon with this theme:

SATAN STRIVES TO DESTROY THE COMFORT OF THE LORD'S TABLE.

1. The devil would twist the doctrine,
2. The devil would twist the attitude.

1. The Devil would twist the doctrine.

Catechism was published in January, 1563. Tail end of Great Reformation under leadership of reformers as Luther and Calvin (died 1559). Had 128 Questions & Answers. Now has 129. How come?

Great Reformation revolved around topic of Justification, ie, is one righteous before God by the grace of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, *or* through good works. Reformation: faith alone, ∴ Lord's Day 23.60. This gospel caught in the sacrament of Lord's Supper: Lord of lords eats with sinners, not because they earn it but because of Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary.

Rome saw Reformation sweeping Europe, ∴ 1562 organized a synod in Trent, called Council of Trent. This Council kick-started Counter-Reformation. Issued some 126 statements re various aspects of doctrine/theology. Rome's objections to *sola fide* came out in what they said re Lord's Supper (or mass, as they called it).

Taught *transubstantiation*. Ie: baker made bread, some sold to homes for dinner, some to sexton for mass. Priest picks up bread, and repeats words of Jesus: "This is My body." At that moment, bread *changes* into actual, real body of Jesus. Still looks like bread, tastes like bread, feels like bread, but *is* body of Jesus. Ibid re wine. Why? Appeal to Jesus' words in Mt 26:26: is = is. But inconsistent: cf John 10:7. Yet nobody look for door knob. Something behind transubstantiation, ie, Lord's Supper is a *sacrifice*. Ie,

Christ's work on Calvary not sufficient; He must be offered anew. ∴ priest has task to take away sins of sinners; sacrifice Christ for them again.

Here a devilish attack to rob Lord's Supper of its gospel, and so the people of their comfort. Lord's Supper no longer a meal..., ∴ friendship/fellowship element gone. Lord's Supper a sacrifice, ∴ Calvary not good enough. ∴ no comfort for people.... Exactly what devil wants. Let people have something like Lord's Supper, but not the real thing!

In face of Satan's attack Lord encouraged people. For He caused Frederick III to recall Olevianus and Ursinus, and commission one more Question & Answer, ie, 80: in reply to statements of Council of Trent. ∴ reprints of Cat in 1563 had an extra Question & Answer. Insist: Scripture teaches Calvary complete, cf Heb 9:27f; 10:12,14.

Why I tell you this? History always important; tells of God's work in face of Satan's attacks. Transubstantiation not a threat to us at the moment (though Rome not change position, and keeps trying to get all churches back under Rome's umbrella). Also: shows how Satan works. For he knows value and wealth of Lord's Supper, and he would rob *you* of that wealth. He tries that today too. How? Blind us to wealth of Lord's Supper, take table for granted.

This the material of Question & Answer 81f.

2. The devil would twist the attitude.

Q: there are some 220 communicant members in our congregation. May all these 'automatically' go to the table next Sunday? Of course, exclude those under discipline. But the rest: may we all think in terms of: I have made profession of faith, I go to church, so I may *of course* attend? To put the question differently: do you know of anybody who deliberately abstained from attending the table because he knew himself guilty of sin? My point: we think in terms of all of us *of course* having the right/privilege to attend. We don't think twice about it.

But here another devilish attack to destroy the wealth of the table! For if I can automatically go, the marvel of the table taken for granted, ie, lost. Just what devil wants. If he can't rob us of our comfort from this side, he'll try from that side.

Consider name: 'Lord's Supper'. Also called 'holy supper'. Why? Because host is holy! Cf Is 6. Isaiah sees into heaven, sees LORD sitting on throne. Above throne were seraphim, six wings, 2 cover face, 2 cover feet, 2 for work. Why not six for work? Recognize God's *holiness*, ∴ cover creatureliness. Meanwhile cry out Holy, Holy, Holy.

∴ Isaiah: vs 5: "woe is me, I'm undone." Why? Unclean lips. Ie, cannot participate in song of angels re God, and people can't either. Isaiah *taken* by sense of God's holiness, and ∴ by sense of own unholiness. Angel: get a coal from altar to touch lips. Altar: represents Christ's cross, cause of forgiveness of sins. Touches lips: ∴ can sing along. Point: God is so holy!

Lord's Supper: holy God is the host. Invites/commands sinners to His table. Would you *dare* to come into His presence?? Or cry out with Isaiah: I'm a man of unclean lips, woe is me?? I can't come?

Here the point of Lord's Day 30.81: who may come? Any who are invited/commanded? No! Yes, all must come, but they must first ensure the right attitude, ie, humility on account of unworthiness, sin. Ie, be "truly displeased with themselves because of their sins."

Cf Luke 18:9ff. Jesus addresses persons who felt righteous in selves, ie, we acceptable before God. Note Pharisee: had no qualms about appearing in God's presence, *of course* he could. Look at good things he did. Regularly to church, gave contributions, not do like other men..., etc. But tax collector: attitude of Is 6:5: "woe is me", "God, be merciful to me a sinner." "Wretched man that I am." Here no pride. Contrasting attitudes! Here is repentance.

Who to table? *Not* those with attitude of Pharisee! Only those with attitude of tax collector, ie, of Isaiah. Cf Lord's Supper Form, pg 594. Reference to 1 Cor 11: need to examine self. Why? To "celebrate this holy supper of the Lord *to our comfort*." How examine self? Pg 595: "first, let everyone consider his sins and accursedness, so that he, detesting himself, may humble himself before God." How consider sins and accursedness? Think back to sins of last week? Yes, but more. Recall who God is! Isaiah recognizes who he is, detests self, *once he recognizes who God is*. And: God shows His mercy, puts coals on lips (= forgiveness of sins), once Isaiah recognizes who *self* is. Ie, here's the first part of pg 595, and 2nd part. Awareness of own depravity opens way to seeing need for Christ's redeeming work. It the awareness of own depravity, coupled with conviction of God's grace *despite* lack of merit, that moves to deep gratitude. Cf Is 6: Isaiah willing to be sent.

Who come to table? Automatic? No! Cannot appreciate wealth of table (sinners may sit down with holy God! Due to Christ's sacrifice, cf elements) unless first recognize own depravity. ∴ attitude of humility is critically important. ∴ Question & Answer 82 obvious.

Only with humility is there comfort in this celebration. Devil strives to take comfort away. If he can't do it through twisting the doctrine, he'll do it through twisting the attitude, ie, making the recipient dull so that he does not tune in to the marvel of the sacrament, and ∴ miss out on the comfort. Here is the danger for us today: we take admission for granted. So we don't give attendance a second thought; *of course* I can sit at table of Lord. But it not so; here need for humility, self-awareness, realization who God is!

Next week Lord's Supper. Who to attend? Lord's Day 28: Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat... I *must* attend. But I *may not attend* without humility, awareness of unworthiness. There's the challenge for this week: recognize God's holiness, and ∴ my unworthiness. Challenge not only for this week, but for always. *A Christian is characterised by humility.*