

Food is good. It gives our bodies nourishment and helps us to stay strong. If we happen to eat healthy things, then our bodies are healthier but if we eat things that are not good for us, then our bodies tend to also get sick.

There is a lot of good food that we have access to and many times those foods will have an effect on our bodies. In my first church, the ladies knew that I enjoyed a good piece of cake and I judged cakes by the frosting. And so they would make sure to hold back a nice corner piece of cake but that wasn't all because when I finally came through the line, they would scrape all the extra frosting off the pan and put it on top of my cake.

I gained about 20 lbs during my first year or so of ministry and probably all of it was from frosting. I am sure that my diabetes was probably started because of that practice as well. The point is that the food we eat is not always the best for us. Like with my piece of cake and plate of frosting, my body could not handle all of the sugar and so I started getting sick.

Jesus said to the Jews, "Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died." The manna was the bread that God gave the people for food. That bread kept them alive for awhile because it gave them the needed nourishment. But in the big picture of things, it did not keep them alive for ever.

There is actually no human food that can keep us alive for ever. Just like the Israelites who died in the wilderness even after eating the manna, we too will die. Bread or any food for that matter will not keep us alive indefinitely.

Depending on what we eat, the food that we consume gives us nourishment and helps us to stay healthy. And if it is bad for us, then we develop some health issues because of what we eat. But no matter what we eat, we will die a physical death.

It is here that Jesus reminds us that he is the living bread that came down from heaven and whoever eats of this bread will live forever. It is clear that Jesus is referencing Holy Communion with this statement.

In the early church, people would hear the Christians talking about eating the body of Christ and drinking the blood of Christ and they actually thought that Christians were cannibals. They did not understand what Jesus was talking about like we do.

As Lutherans, we believe that through the words of institution, Christ comes and is present with, in, under and through the bread and wine. We eat the physical element, bread or wafer, and we drink the wine or juice. The physical elements do not change. They are still bread or wafer and wine or juice. The difference is not in the elements but rather in God's presence with the elements.

As we share in Holy Communion, we are sharing in Christ. I can tear off a piece of bread and eat it here and it is just bread. But if I was to bless the same bread through the Words of Institution and then eat it, I would receive Christ as well.

We do not understand how all that happens, but we believe it is true because Jesus instituted this sacrament for us. Through Holy Communion, we receive forgiveness. And when we live in God's forgiveness, we also live in the promise of eternal life.

I know of churches that celebrate Holy Communion once a quarter. There are others that celebrate once or twice a month. And there are some that celebrate every week. There are also a lot of discussion as to which way is better. With the two extremes, the once a quarter people don't want Holy Communion to lose its "specialness" by having it too often while the every weekers look towards the need of receiving God's grace every week through the sacrament.

For me personally, Holy Communion would never lose its specialness even if we celebrated every day because through it, we receive Christ and that is what makes it special. Jesus told us to share in Holy Communion as often as we can for the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus gave this sacrament just for you so that you could live in God's forgiveness and receive the promise of eternal life.