

**“What Do You Desire?”**  
**Luke 22:7-20**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

What do you desire? Human desire is, no doubt, something that you’ve all experienced throughout your lives. When you were a child you wanted a pony, or to go to Disneyland, or even just the daily desire to please your parents. As an adult, you desire to make enough money to pay the bills, or save enough to go on that vacation you’ve been planning. You want your children to grow up and be productive members of society, and hopefully use their faith to guide them through it. You all desire many things for yourselves and your families. But what does the Lord desire?

In Luke’s account of the Gospel lesson this evening, the Lord of All is reclined at table with His apostles, sharing the Passover meal in the upper room of some guy's house. Now, they weren’t leaning back, casually munching on some snacks while Jesus regales them with stories about His miracles, or joking about the look the Lord saw on Peter's face when He walked on water. The Christ is *earnestly desiring* to eat this meal with His disciples. They are celebrating the Passover Feast to commemorate the passing of the Angel of Death over the Israelite homes in Egypt that were protected by the blood of the lamb, a lamb which the families later ate in those homes. Only, in this meal, Christ is the lamb, and He is preparing to cover us with His blood when He goes to the cross to take our place and protect us from eternal death and damnation. He is *earnestly desiring* to eat this meal with them. The Greek word Luke records here is translated as *earnest desire*, but the sense in this instance indicates an urgent longing. What the Lord is about to institute is so important that he simply cannot wait to share it with His disciples.

Worldly desires constantly seep into your life in today’s society, and even more today into the lives of your children. Sinful desires present themselves everywhere you look in the world. The scourge of pornography and voyeurism lead to the sins of lust and infidelity. The prevalence of drugs and alcohol leads to drunkenness and idolatry, as they become the most essential things in a person’s life. Everyone has pet sins that they just can’t shake, and you desire the fulfillment of those sins to bring you pleasure and happiness, and society is always right there to cheer you on and tell you that you can just do whatever you want without any consequences. They scream from the rooftops that it’s ok for a man or woman to desire another of the same sex instead of treating it as a sin, or that you can just be whoever you want and change the person God made you to be. They even go so far as to not just condone, but earnestly desire the murder of innocent

babies in the name of being allowed to fulfill every whim of their sinful nature without consequence. This is all the devil's work, but don't deceive yourself into thinking this is all something new.

We read from Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians that the church in Corinth was rife with sexual immorality, idolatry, greed, and drunkenness. He says in chapter 5:11, "But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard or swindler - not even to eat with such a one." Now, you must be careful with this passage, because while he absolutely condemns these sins in society, very clearly here Paul is speaking about those who are brothers in the faith. Those who claim to be of the faith and yet indulge in these evil desires should be so far removed from the church that you would not even consider eating with them.

We see this in the church today with the ordaining of homosexuals, transgenders, and women, and in the rampant greed of the mega-church movements with their millionaire "pastors." The callous arrogance to just throw out the Word of God in favor of what is pleasing to society should alarm you, and you should call it what it is: Satan's work. And don't think that somehow you are alone in these attacks. The Evil One is even so bold as to tempt the blameless Son of God, as it is recorded in Matthew 4:8-9, "Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 'All these I will give you if you fall down and worship me.'" Too often, you are tempted, and too often, you do the devil's bidding. And when you hear the words of the evil one and allow him power by willfully engaging in sinful acts, you replace Christ with the devil himself.

In this sinful world, Satan is all around you. These sins that plague the fallen creation are Satan's earnest desires. He wants nothing more than to sow his seeds of evil throughout society, because when society is "free and loose" the church takes a backseat, and gets attacked for its faith. And for fallen humanity, it's easy to succumb to that evil. Think about how much time you spend on your own desires. It's never that hard to forgo church on Sunday, or maybe Thursday, in favor of something that came up a couple of days earlier that might be more enjoyable for you. Or when it's flipped and you forgot about a church service, or a church meeting came up that interfered with your desire to go to that concert or sporting event you had tickets to attend, and you just kept your plans anyway and neglected the Lord. Satan's earnest desire is a singular, purposeful attempt to drive you away from your Savior. He will always try to convince you that your time

and desires are more important than your time with God, and you convince yourself that God's going to keep loving you anyway, so you'll get to church or say your daily prayers whenever it fits into your schedule.

While humanity's earnest sinful desires in this fallen world create chaos and complicate your lives, God's earnest desire is one of simplicity and beauty. The apostle Paul says in 1 Timothy 2:4 that God "...desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." In the 3rd chapter of his 2nd letter, the apostle Peter says, "The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." The justification God offers through the redemptive act of His Son, Jesus Christ, is for everyone; every person on the fallen earth is one whom Christ has died for on that cross. And salvation belongs to all who would receive it by faith, yet the Sacrament of the Altar is meant for those who already have that saving faith. Jesus' actions say a lot in this account as He earnestly desires to eat this meal with His brothers, His disciples. He is not going into the room with just anyone, or out in a wide-open public setting where all can participate, but in a private room, with the men who have followed Him from the moment they were called into His service.

That is what we do here in this communion service. We meet here alone, in this private room, as a community of believers, together with Christ, to share in the foretaste of the meal He earnestly desires to share with us when we reach everlasting life with Him. Christ is longing for us to join Him in heaven, earnestly desiring to eat the meal that is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God—the feast of the Lamb in His kingdom which will have no end—to share in that meal with the community of all believers that have gone before us. When the Sacrament is offered here, we get a glimpse into that meal. We share this meal here with each other to prepare us for that meal with God Himself when we reach that glorious moment. But while we long to be with Him and leave this messy, unbelieving world behind, we must also use the time He has given to us to witness to the lost, so that they might believe and join us here, at this table of the Lord, where He invites us to eat, to share in this meal, as we earnestly desire to eat the meal He has prepared before us at the heavenly table. Just as Jesus desired to share the last moments of His earthly life teaching and sharing the meal of His body and blood with His disciples, we share this meal of His body and blood with each other, fellow Christians and saved children of God.

We come to this table to receive that very same body and blood that Christ shared in that Last Supper, His own body and blood which He earnestly desires to share with us on His journey to Calvary and the cross. There is bread. There is wine. There is His body. There is His blood. All wrapped up into one redemptive meal for us to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of sins. This is the primary purpose of the Supper: to receive the forgiveness of sins which was won for us in Christ's redemptive work on the cross. Luther says in the Small Catechism:

What is the benefit of this eating and drinking? These words, 'Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins,' show us that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

Your purpose in coming to this altar is to receive the forgiveness of sins, sins that Satan and your sinful desires will tell you are ok, but you come here to have them washed away by the blood of Christ which now covers you. You remember all those sins I mentioned earlier that are so common with Christians? The ones that you have to wrestle with in everyday life? Every one of them is covered, forgiven for the sake of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who went to the cross to bleed and die for you.

So, what do you desire, knowing now that Christ has covered your sins with His holy and precious blood? Just as Christ earnestly desired to share the Passover meal with His disciples, we earnestly desire to come to this altar to receive Jesus' life-giving body and blood for the forgiveness of sins. At all times, you should desire to share this meal. You should feel a pull, a longing to receive it at every opportunity. In the darkest hours of your lives, seek the Sacrament, so that you might hear the words that give the assurance of your salvation, "given and shed for YOU for the forgiveness of sins. Never avoid it. SEEK it. LONG for it. EARNESTLY DESIRE to receive it, just as Christ earnestly desires to freely give His forgiveness to all those who believe in Him. And always remember, that forgiveness is yours not because you seek it or desire it, but because it is Christ's gift for you. His body and blood that He willingly shed on the cross to purchase your salvation and redeem you from death and the devil is the price that He willingly paid that you would be covered in His righteousness.

The Sacrament of the Altar holds its place as the culmination of the Divine Service because it is God's ultimate service to us. He sent His only Son to suffer and die on the cross so that we might have everlasting life with Him. What an amazing and mind-blowing gift! We come to the altar to freely receive forgiveness for all our wretchedness, as undeserving miserable sinners, because God has promised to be there for that purpose.

Christ instituted this supper to fulfill His earnest desire that men receive His forgiveness, to cover us in His robe of righteousness won for us on the cross. We don't deserve it, but God gives it. And nothing we can do will make us worthy of receiving it. But Christ was the worthy sacrifice to make us holy and blameless, to make us worthy to stand in the presence of God on the last day and say, "I was a lost and condemned sinner, but your Son redeemed me from that judgment. He covered my sin so that you, O Lord, might only see Him and not the stain of sin I bear in my flesh." That is the gift we receive in this blessed Sacrament. And so, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, herein lies your redemption—that through the means of God's saving grace you have heard the Word of God, been washed pure by the blood of the Lamb in the waters of your baptism, which baptized you into Jesus' death, so that you will have everlasting life with Him when He calls you home to heaven, where He and the whole communion of saints is longing, *earnestly desiring* to share the Lord's heavenly meal with you forever and ever. Amen.