

There's Room at the Table

God's Means for Making Us Fit for the Feast

Series Introduction

Nothing brings people closer than sitting around a table to eat. Being invited to join someone at a table for dinner brings feelings of acceptance and belonging. So how can we be certain that there is room for us at God's table in heaven? Are we worthy to join him? Are we good enough to sit down? Thankfully, God himself provides us with the answer to those questions. He not only invites us to join him at his table in heaven. He also lovingly provides the means through which he makes us worthy to do so. He not only prepares the feast for us. He even prepares us, his guests.

Suggestions for worship

- **Orders of Service.** The content of the series lends itself to several orders for worship found in our hymnal and supplement.
 - Gathering Rite on Holy Baptism (CWS) for any or all of weeks 1-3.
 - Consider celebrating Holy Communion using any of the orders of service that include it during weeks 4 and 5, even if one or both isn't a regularly-schedule Communion Sunday.
- **Small Catechism.** As part of the Service of the Word, a responsive reading from Luther's Small Catechism is a natural fit. Under the weekly themes below, the appropriate section is listed. Possible places for this reading are: in place of the verse of the day or following the gospel.
- **Music Suggestions**
 - ["Come to the Waters."](#)
This piece uses imagery from Isaiah 55:1-7. It could be used each week at the beginning of the service each week incorporating a responsive dialogue from Isaiah 55. The congregation would sing the refrain and cantor/choir leadership would be needed for the verses. NOTE: The piece is suggested for use in connection with the reception of new members. Some adaptation may be necessary.
 - ["All Who Are Thirsty, Come to the Spring."](#)
Also based on Isaiah 55:1-5. Very simple yet elegant anthem. Arranged for two-part voices that a choir of any size and ability can handle.

Suggestions for outreach

The theme of this series naturally lends itself to outreach – and distinctively Lutheran outreach at that. Here are some specific ideas:

- Schedule a "Baptism Sunday" on the third or fourth week of the series. On your postcard and other advertising materials, mention that you welcome anyone who would like to find out more information about baptism for themselves or anyone in their family. God-willing you have some visitors on the first week who give you an opportunity to do that. You have two weeks to do all of the necessary follow up with them and then hopefully there is the blessing of some baptisms on one of the last Sundays of the series that focus on it.
- The final weeks of the series focus on Christ's meal, Holy Communion. New people won't be able to participate, but the series will increase their eagerness to do so. Schedule a new session of your Bible Information Class to begin shortly after the end of the series. You can also include

information about this on your postcard. The last three weeks provide natural opportunities to stress the blessings of the Sacrament, the importance of instruction to prepare for it, and the class that you offer for that very purpose.

Week 1: Everyone is invited

Focus:

Have you ever felt left out? Maybe it was a wedding or a birthday party. Maybe it was a camping trip or a night out on the town. Whatever the occasion, you weren't invited. And nothing feels worse. Thankfully, when it comes to our God, there's always a place at the table. In his limitless love for mankind, he wants everyone to have a seat at his heavenly feast. As a result, he sent his Son to do everything required for our salvation. As a result of the Father's love and Jesus' sacrifice, there is room for one and all.

Lessons:

First Lesson	Isaiah 49:1-6	The Father appoints his Son to bring salvation to the ends of the earth.
Second Lesson	Romans 3:21-30	The Son's sacrifice makes room at the table for every sinner.
Gospel	Luke 15:11-32	The Father's boundless love makes room at the table for the most rebellious of sons.
Psalm of the Day	Psalm 103	The Lord is compassionate and gracious; he does not treat us as our sins deserve.

Catechism Reading:

Baptism 1 Christ's institution of baptism is part of his commission to all nations.

Notes for the Preacher:

You've advertised your new series in the local paper. You've sent postcards in the mail. You've handed them out door-to-door. Your members have invited friends. This is a perfect opportunity to share clear law and gospel. Don't let it pass you by. The lessons are chosen carefully to make it clear that "everyone is invited" is not the same as "all paths lead to God" or "God accepts you no matter what." Rather, through Christ, and through him alone, salvation is a free gift to all.

Hymn Suggestions:

CW	365	Love, Divine, All Love Excelling
CW	379	Amazing Grace - How Sweet the Sound
CW	384	By Grace I'm Saved
CW	391	God Loved the World So that He Gave
CW	392	Not unto Us
CW	479	Jesus, Your Boundless Love to Me
CWS	749	The Love of Christ, Who Died for Me
CWS	752	In Christ Alone

Week 2: Washing up

Focus:

When you were younger, you had to be told. "Go wash up for dinner," your mother would say. Now it probably comes quite naturally. Before we sit down at the table, we need to be clean. The same is true of our relationship with God. As he makes a place for us at his table, he starts by washing us clean. Through the sacrament of baptism, God washes away the sin from our souls. Through the power of the Spirit at work in baptism, we are washed up and ready to eat.

Lessons:

First Lesson	1 Kings 5:1-15a	The Lord demonstrates his power to cleanse.
Second Lesson	1 Peter 3:18-22	Baptism washes clean the conscience dirtied by sin.
Gospel	Mark 7:1-8,14,15,21-23	Jesus illustrates the foolishness of outward washing and the importance of inward washing.
Psalm of the Day	Psalm 24	Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? He who has clean hands and a pure heart.

Catechism Reading:

Baptism 2 Baptism works the forgiveness of sins

Notes for the Preacher:

This Sunday's focus provides a great opportunity to encourage baptism. If God blesses you with people who are new to church or have been away for a while, odds are there are some who haven't gotten around to having their children baptized. It might come as a welcome surprise to hear that there aren't really any hoops to jump through (or fees to pay) for them to have their children baptized at your church. Let them know how they can speak to you further about baptism.

Hymn Suggestions:

CW	297	Baptized in Water
CW	332	Go, My Children, with My Blessing
CW	372	I Lay My Sins on Jesus
CW	394	Blessed Are the Saints of God
CW	397	Just As I Am, without One Plea
CW	398	Lord, We Confess Our Numerous Faults
CWS	736	All Christians Who Have Been Baptized

Week 3: The dress code

Focus:

Have you ever gone somewhere and felt underdressed? Overdressed? Whether it's a black-tie event or a backyard barbecue, not knowing the dress code can lead to anxiety and embarrassment. Thankfully, God makes the dress code at his eternal banquet in heaven perfectly clear. A perfect white robe of righteousness is the only dress that is acceptable. God not only demands that dress but supplies it to us through baptism. As a result of Christ's work and this precious sacrament, we are properly dressed for God's eternal banquet.

Lessons:

First Lesson	Isaiah 61:10-62:3	God clothes us in garments of salvation and splendor.
Second Lesson	Galatians 3:23-29	All those baptized into Christ are clothed with Christ.
Gospel	Matthew 22:1-14	Jesus warns against breaking the dress code at his banquet.
Psalm of the Day	Psalm 132	May your priests be clothed with righteousness.

Catechism Reading:

Baptism 3 Through baptism, we are heirs of eternal life.

Hymn Suggestions:

CW	219	Lord, When Your Glory I Shall See
CW	335	O Kingly Love, that Faithfully
CW	376	Jesus, Your Blood and Righteousness
CW	383	Blessed Are They, Forever Blest
CW	401	Your Works, Not Mine, O Christ

Week 4: Repeat as needed**Focus:**

Washing up and dressing properly isn't something that happens only once. It's something that happens prior to every meal. In the same way, the washing that we receive at baptism isn't just a one-time act. Even after our baptism, our sinful nature remains and must be repeatedly drowned through the lasting power of our baptism. Thankfully, our gracious God uses his law and to work in us the repentance through which that sinful nature is repeatedly put to death. He uses his gospel to strengthen the new life in us for godly living. The work that he began at our baptism continues every day.

Lessons:

First Lesson	2 Samuel 12:1-13	God uses his messengers to work needed repentance.
Second Lesson	Colossians 3:1-14	Holiness is both an accomplished fact and an ongoing activity.
Gospel	Luke 11:1-4,11,12	Jesus teaches his disciples to repent in prayer and promises their Father will answer.
Psalm of the Day	Psalm 51a	Create in me a pure heart; restore to me the joy of salvation.

Catechism Reading:

Baptism 4 Baptism has meaning for our daily life.

Notes for the Preacher:

This Sunday serves as a transition between the focus on baptism and Holy Communion. Daily repentance is essential in the life of a Christian. This week's theme gives you an opportunity to stress that, especially as it relates to self-examination in preparation for Holy Communion. As guests who are with you hear you stress the importance careful preparation to your people, they will already begin to see your closed communion practice as an act of love rather than one of arrogance or exclusion. Starting with this week, the last three services provide a great opportunity to encourage attendance at your upcoming Bible Information Class.

Hymn Suggestions:

Hymn

CW	294	Baptized into Your name Most Holy
CW	303	With Broken Heart and Contrite Sigh
CW	304	Jesus Sinners Does Receive
CWS	739	Baptismal Waters Cover Me

Week 5: The menu**Focus:**

When you finally sit down at the table, washed up and dressed properly, your attention quickly turns to the menu. What is being served? Will it be worth all of the preparation or will it be a disappointment? Having prepared a place for us at his table, the Lord now serves us his meal. And the menu exceeds our greatest expectations. Christ has prepared for us the very best he has to offer: his own body and blood. The very price paid for our salvation, our very own ticket to heaven, is given us to eat and to drink.

Lessons:

First Lesson	Exodus 12:1-11	The Lord describes the menu for the Old Covenant meal, the Passover.
Second Lesson	1 Cor. 10:16,17;11:27-29	Paul affirms the menu of Christ's meal and its implications.
Gospel	Mark 14:22-24	Jesus explains the menu for his New Covenant meal: This is my body; this is my blood.
Psalm of the Day	Psalm 116	I will lift up the cup of salvation.

Catechism Reading:

Lord's Supper 1 This meal is Christ's true body and blood.

Notes for the Preacher:

Picking up where you left off last week, this provides further opportunity to explain the loving practice of closed-communion, express your desire for all to receive the sacrament, and encourage your Bible Information Class as a means to that end.

Although the blessings of the Sacrament are covered more fully in the final week, the implications of the real presence hardly allow the preacher not to mention them already this week.

Hymn Suggestions:

Hymn

CW	135	The Death of Jesus Christ, Our Lord
CW	310	I Come, O Savior, to Your Table
CW	311	Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness
CW	313	Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior
CW	314	O Living Bread from Heaven
CWS	740	Draw Near, Draw Near
CWS	742	What Is This Bread
CWS	744	You Satisfy the Hungry Heart

Week 6: Satisfied yet starving

Focus:

No matter how many times we eat, we eventually grow hungry again. The same is true of our spiritual life. The hunger and want produced by constant sin require constant satisfying through the meal Christ has prepared. Thankfully, that's exactly what Christ's meal does. Each time we dine at his table, we receive the forgiveness of sins and strength for godly living. At the same time, this meal prepares us for and points us toward Christ's eternal banquet in heaven. Each time we receive it, we grow in our longing to sit down at God's table in heaven where we will never be hungry again.

Lessons:

First Lesson	Isaiah 25:6-9	The Lord promises an eternal banquet for his people.
Second Lesson	1 Corinthians 11:23-27	Christ's meal keeps us well fed until he comes again.
Gospel	Matthew 26:26-29	Christ's meal gives us all we need: the forgiveness of sins.
Psalm of the Day	Psalm 23	Our Good Shepherd feeds us now and promises a banquet to come.

Catechism Reading:

Lord's Supper 2 We receive the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

Notes for the Preacher:

The previous two weeks offered opportunities to stress the importance of preparation and instruction based on the seriousness of the Sacrament and the warnings against receiving it improperly. This week the same encouragement is based on something else: the blessings of the Sacrament. Preach its blessings so strongly that visitors desire to receive it for the first time and members desire to receive it often.

Hymn Suggestions:

CW	141	At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing
CW	265	This Is the Feast of Victory
CW	315	Here, O My Lord, I See You Face to Face
CW	375	The King of Love My Shepherd Is
CWS	728	Jerusalem the Golden
CWS	744	You Satisfy the Hungry Heart
CWS	741	Take and Eat
CWS	788	Thanks Be to God!