

Sermon followed by Service

November 19, 2023 - Kitchen Dedication

Revelation 19:1-9

What's your favorite meal? Your favorite food? Your favorite comfort food? I remember green bean casserole, Mrs. Krueger's lasagna, Maundy Thursday pie night in Hillrose, Colorado, New Year's Eve herring and Tiger Meat, Lisa's shrimp and grits. And back again when I was young, Dad would take me along when he would preach for a Mission Festival, and then we would stay for the church pot-luck - a taste of heaven. Like the fellowship table downstairs here, before Family Bible Hour - a taste of heaven. I better stop before I start drooling.

Something else I remember is how easy it is to get suckered into thinking bad food is good. I remember telling my brothers in a McDonald's parking lot, "McDonald's makes the best hamburgers." This was back when Mom broiled big, thick, juicy burgers with cheese melting on top. It's so easy to get suckered into thinking that garbage is good for us. Like Adam and Eve were suckered. Like we still get suckered by sin and Satan, and the lies of the world around us.

We live in a world hell-bent on tempting our tastes, not just for green bean casserole, but hell-bent on tempting and twisting our tastes for love and sex, pleasure and excitement, comfort and control. We live in a world hell-bent on turning us away from God and away from who God created us to be. We live in a world hell-bent on turning our created appetite for God into an appetite for self, turning our appetite for God into an appetite to

be god for self. But our world isn't satisfied with just offering, luring, tempting, promising. Our world is more and more into pushing, demanding, and controlling so that our appetites and lives fit their appetites and lives. That is the setting for all our lessons today - a world fighting to crush and control Christ and his Church.

What is God's way to deal with that? We see it in our second lesson. He gathers us together around Word and Sacrament to be his family together, and to help us be family together he adds in food, table and kitchen time. Let me put it a little bit differently. He doesn't just gather us around words and bread and wine; in Word and Sacrament he gathers us around himself. Not just around, with God here up front and you around him over there. No, in Word and Sacrament, God in Jesus connects you with himself, with God. In Baptism, the Father and his Spirit connects and covers you with Jesus. In the Lord's Supper, Jesus gives you his body and blood; he gives you himself. And he gives us an added side benefit. Did you notice how Jesus - with the bread and wine - uses table and kitchen time to make our connection with him personal, personal with him, personal with each other?

We might wonder "How? How could a pure and holy God want to be together with me with my twisted and out-of-control appetites?" How? He isn't judging. I'm not saying that God has lost his sense of right and wrong, that he has surrendered his sense of right and wrong to us and our world's sense of right and wrong. No, God is still very clear that there is right and wrong, and that he is the judge of right and wrong. And when I say that

God isn't judging, I'm not saying that God doesn't judge; in our lesson from Revelation, we very much hear God judging. When I say that God isn't judging, here is what I mean - "God has already judged; he has already judged you, when he judged Jesus in your place on the cross. But God's judging didn't stop there. God also judged Jesus, and you with Jesus, when he raised Jesus back to life." Now we get to circle back to baptism. In your baptism, God connected you with Jesus; he gave you Jesus' life and death, so that the Father can say to you what he said to Jesus at his baptism: **"You are my son, my daughter, whom I love with you I am well pleased."** Some days we might think: "I'm not seeing it." So Jesus invites us to his table for some Jesus' time: "My body for you, my blood for you, my life and my love for you, my peace and forgiveness for you."

Not just for a moment. Not just for this life. In the Lord's Supper, Jesus points us ahead to another meal with us, another feast with us - the Wedding Supper of the Lamb. The Wedding Supper celebrating the marriage of Christ and his Bride, the Church. This past week I was reminded of some couples who were married, and then bride or groom had to go off to war. The joy of the wedding was made bittersweet by husband and wife going separate ways wondering if they would ever see each other again. In our lesson, we like the timing better. Christ wins! The enemy is crushed. Babylon is destroyed. All the powers against Christ and his Church are defeated. So the groom comes home, and bride and groom are brought together forever.

It's a neat picture. We see the Lamb, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, the Lamb who was crushed and sacrificed by God, crucified on the cross, the Lamb of God who has been rejected by this world over and over again. We see that Lamb of God coming back from battle victorious, coming back to marry the love of his life. And all of heaven is cheering - the saints and angels and elders and the four beasts all cheering, even God himself cheering, cheering Christ's victory, cheering his upcoming wedding.

And we see the bride beautifully dressed and ready for her husband. She's wearing the dress he gave her - righteousness decreed and then righteousness lived. We hear heaven cheer for the bride and the groom. We even hear heaven cheer for us, for you and me: **“Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb.”**

In the Lord's Supper, we have a foretaste of that wedding supper; as he gives us his body and blood, we get to be together with Jesus! But that's not all; as he gives us bread and wine, he gives us kitchen and table time together - time to think about how good it is to be with God, time to think about how good it is to be together as the family of God. In our lesson from Acts, Luke highlights more kitchen and table time. The early church didn't just do Word and Sacrament together and then go their own ways. They came together for kitchen and table time so they could grow together, care together, encourage together, maybe cry together, laugh together, cheer together. They came together for kitchen and table time so they could invite and include and

help and encourage more and more from out there to be in here together.

That's what we want our kitchen and table time to be about, right? Not just a time and a place to eat and drink, not just a time and a place to cook and do dishes, but a time and a place to grow together, care together, encourage together; a time and a place to invite together and include together; a time and place to show and share what it's like to be the family of God. Thank you, Lord, for bringing us together for Word and Sacrament; thank you, Lord, for bringing us together for kitchen and table time. Amen.

November 18 & 19, 2023

DIVINE SERVICE II

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we thank our Lord for blessing us and our ministry with a new kitchen. What does a kitchen have to do with ministry? Two things come to mind: 1) we have a God who provides not only for soul, but for body as well, and 2) we have a God who loves to gather his people together to be an including, encouraging family. May God bless us to use his kitchen to his glory and the good of his people!

OPENING HYMN

"God Is Here! As We Your People"

Hymn 858

God is here! As we your people meet to offer praise and prayer,
may we find in fuller measure what it is in Christ we share.
Here, as in the world around us, all our varied skills and arts
wait the coming of the Spirit into open minds and hearts.

Here are symbols to remind us of our lifelong need of grace.
Here are table, font, and pulpit; here the cross has central place.
Here, in honesty of preaching, here, in silence as in speech,
here, in newness and renewal, God the Spirit comes to each.

Here our children find a welcome in the Shepherd's flock and fold;
here, as bread and wine are taken, Christ sustains us as of old.
Here the servants of the Servant seek in worship to explore
what it means in daily living to believe and to adore.

Lord of all, of Church and kingdom, in an age of change and doubt,
keep us faithful to the gospel; help us work your purpose out.
Here, in this day's dedication, all we have to give, receive;
we who cannot live without you, we adore you! We believe!

INVOCATION

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

CONFESSION

M: Dear friends, let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

C: **Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.**

For faithless worrying and selfish pride,

For sins of habit and sins of choice,

For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,

I deserve to be cast away from your presence forever.

O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.

ABSOLUTION

M: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy, God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the word of Christ through his called servant: I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

LORD, HAVE MERCY (*Kyrie*)

M: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

For the well-being of all people everywhere, that they may receive from you all they need to sustain body and life, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: For the spread of your life-giving gospel throughout the world, that all who are lost in sin may be brought to faith in you, hear our prayer, O Christ.

C: **Christ, have mercy.**

M: For patience and perseverance in this life, that we may not lose the hope of heaven as we await your return, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: Lord of life, live in us that we may live for you.

C: **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, heavenly Father, you call us and bring us together to be your family. In your Word, and especially in Jesus, you show us your heart – a heart that is eager to gather us together with you and each other. By Word and Sacrament today, give us the same desire to be with you and each other as your family, for your glory and the good of your people; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 25:6–9

On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare
a feast of rich food for all peoples,
a banquet of aged wine—
the best of meats and the finest of wines.
On this mountain he will destroy
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,
the sheet that covers all nations;
he will swallow up death forever.
The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears
from all faces;
he will remove his people's disgrace
from all the earth.
The LORD has spoken.
In that day they will say,
"Surely this is our God;
we trusted in him, and he saved us.
This is the LORD, we trusted in him;
let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son.
And to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning,
Is now, and will be forever. Amen. Refrain**

SECOND READING

Acts 2:42–47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Matthew 8:11

Alleluia. "I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." Alleluia.

GOSPEL MEDLEY

Matthew 26:26–29

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Revelation 19:1–9

After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting:

“Hallelujah!

Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,
for true and just are his judgments.

He has condemned the great prostitute
who corrupted the earth by her adulteries.

He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”

And again they shouted:

“Hallelujah!

The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.”

The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried:

“Amen, Hallelujah!”

Then a voice came from the throne, saying:

“Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him,
both great and small!”

Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:

“Hallelujah!

For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and be glad
and give him glory!

For the wedding of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready.

Fine linen, bright and clean,
was given her to wear.”

Then the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

HYMN OF THE DAY

"Oh, How Good It Is"

Hymn 731

Oh, how good it is when the fam'ly of God
dwells together in spirit, in faith and unity.
Where the bonds of peace, of acceptance and love
are the fruits of his presence here among us.

Refrain

So with one voice we'll sing to the Lord,
and with one heart we'll live out his word,
till the whole earth sees the Redeemer has come,
for he dwells in the presence of his people.

Oh, how good it is on this journey we share
to rejoice with the happy and weep with those who mourn.
For the weak find strength, the afflicted find grace
when we offer the blessing of belonging.

Refrain

Oh, how good it is to embrace his command
to prefer one another, forgive as he forgives.
When we live as one we all share in the love
of the Son with the Father and the Spirit.

Refrain

SERMON

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father.

Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER

Father, we thank you!

For gathering us together with you and each other in your family,
we thank you!

For gathering us around Word and Sacrament, **we thank you!**

For gathering us together to listen to each other, and to laugh with each other, **we thank you!**

For gathering us together to encourage and be encouraged, **we thank you!**

For gathering us together, invited and included, **we thank you!**

For gathering us together, to invite and to include, **we thank you!**

For a Church where we can gather around your Word in worship,
we thank you!

For a Fellowship Hall and Kitchen where we can gather as your family, to be friends with each other, **we thank you!**

For people willing to give and to serve for our new Kitchen, **we thank you!**

Father, forgive us.

For the times and ways we mess up without looking to clean up,
forgive us.

For the times we look to be served without appreciation for those who
serve us, **forgive us.**

For the times we look to be served without a thought of finding a way to
serve others, **forgive us.**

For the times we darken your house with grumbling and complaining,
forgive us.

For the ways we shut people out by having to have our way, instead of
welcoming them in, **forgive us.**

Father, help us.

To step up and step in, to serve with joy, **help us, good Lord.**

To invite and to include, to share your joy, **help us, good Lord.**

To work your purposes among us, to give a foretaste of heaven's joy,
help us, good Lord.

Father, bless.

Bless those who joined together to give and to work for this project;
bless them and bless us, Lord.

Bless those who will serve, and bless those who will gather;
bless them and bless us, Lord.

Bless our new kitchen; **bless this place for your glory and the good of your
people. Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom
come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our
daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who
trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from
evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and
ever. Amen.**

THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Gluten-free wafers are available; ask Pastor.)

M: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

M: Lift up your hearts.

C: **We lift them up unto the Lord.**

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

C: **It is good and right so to do.**

M: It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who has called us to be his own so that we may live under him in his kingdom and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.

Therefore with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY *Sanctus*

O holy, holy, holy

Lord God of pow'r and might,

Your glory, earth and heaven

In countless ways recite.

Hosanna! Come and save us,

Lord God of hosts on high,

And in your grace and mercy

Receive our fervent cry.

Hosanna in the highest!

How truly blest is he

Who in God's name is coming

To set his people free!

He comes to bring salvation

And with his blood outpoured,

Deliver us from bondage—

Hosanna, mighty Lord!

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

M: Blessed are you, O Lord of heaven and earth. We praise and thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, and we remember the great acts of love through which he has ransomed us from sin, death, and the devil's power.

By his incarnation, he became one with us.
By his perfect life, he fulfilled your holy will.
By his innocent death, he overcame hell.
By his rising from the grave, he opened heaven.

Invited by your grace and instructed by your Word, we approach your table with repentant and joyful hearts. Strengthen us through Christ's body and blood, and preserve us in the true faith until we feast with him and all his ransomed people in glory everlasting.

C: Amen.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my † body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my † blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

M: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: Amen.

LAMB OF GOD *Agnus Dei*

Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.
Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the

world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God,
 you take a - way the sin of the world;
 grant us your peace. A - men.

DISTRIBUTION HYMN

"Take and Eat"

Hymn 676

Take and eat, take and eat, this is my body given up for you.
 Take and drink, take and drink, this is my blood given up for you.

I am the Word that spoke and light was made;
 I am the seed that died to be reborn;
 I am the bread that comes from heav'n above;
 I am the vine that fills your cup with joy. *Refrain*

I am the way that leads the exile home;
 I am the truth that sets the captive free;
 I am the life that raises up the dead;
 I am your peace, true peace my gift to you. *Refrain*

I am the Lamb that takes away your sin;
 I am the gate that guards you night and day;
 you are my flock: you know the shepherd's voice;
 you are my own: your ransom is my blood. *Refrain*

I am the cornerstone that God has laid;
 a chosen stone and precious in his eyes;
 you are God's dwelling-place, on me you rest;
 like living stones, a temple for God's praise. *Refrain*

I am the light that came into the world;
I am the light that darkness cannot hide;
I am the Morning Star that never sets;
lift up your face, in you my light will shine. *Refrain*

I am the first and last, the Living One;
I am the Lord who died that you might live;
I am the bridegroom, this my wedding song;
you are my bride, come to the marriage feast. *Refrain*

CLOSING PRAYER

M: We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet that you have given us to eat and to drink in this sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith, nourished our hope, and strengthened our love. By your Spirit help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

“O Church, Arise”

Hymn 870

O Church, arise and put your armor on; hear the call of Christ our captain.
For now the weak can say that they are strong
in the strength that God has given.
With shield of faith and belt of truth we'll stand against the devil's lies;
an army bold whose battle cry is love, reaching out to those in darkness.

Our call to war— to love the captive soul, but to rage against the captor;
and with the sword that makes the wounded whole
we will fight with faith and valor.

When faced with trials on ev'ry side, we know the outcome is secure,
and Christ will have the prize for which he died—
an inheritance of nations.

Come see the cross, where love and mercy meet,
as the Son of God is stricken;
then see his foes lie crushed beneath his feet, for the Conqueror has risen!
And as the stone is rolled away, and Christ emerges from the grave,
this vict'ry march continues till the day ev'ry eye and heart shall see him.

So Spirit come, put strength in ev'ry stride, give grace for ev'ry hurdle,
that we may run with faith to win the prize of a servant good and faithful.
As saints of old still line the way, retelling triumphs of his grace,
we hear their calls and hunger for the day
when with Christ we stand in glory.

OFFERING

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WELS CHRISTIAN AID AND RELIEF



“Do not worry about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6). Easier said than done, right? Life in this broken world is hard. So many problems. So much to worry about. But our gracious God tells us: “Don’t worry. Bring it to me. I love you. I’ll take care of you.” What a relief it is to bring all our wants and worries to God, trusting that he cares for us. What a pleasure to do so with a grateful heart, thankful for all the ways he does care for us. Our God is so generous! He gives us far more than we need. One of the reasons he does this is so we can show our thankfulness to him by sharing his abundance with others. With your faithful participation and generous support, WELS Christian Aid and Relief seeks to help you share God’s abundance. We do this in three main ways: we offer relief for those impacted by natural disasters, we support humanitarian aid projects in our WELS mission fields both at home and abroad, and we help WELS congregations assist their members who are dealing with extreme medical or financial challenges. Your special gifts, shared from the abundance God has showered on you, provide critical assistance to people who are hurting and result in many opportunities to share the precious gospel of our Savior. We thank you and we thank God for you!

**Christian Aid and Relief grant totals
for fiscal year 22-23: \$1,641,154**

WELS Christian Aid and Relief

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Kitchen Dedication Day is Here!

Early Thanksgiving is here!

Our road to this day has been a remarkable series of blessings that we can be so thankful for. Since we first recognized the need to do a serious upgrade on our kitchen we have been blessed to have:

- Members contributing funds for the upgrade
- Volunteers continuing to work around the challenges of the old kitchen
- Volunteers helping outline needs/changes desired
- More donations
- An abundance of patience as STJ was forced to prioritize other ministry improvement projects first
- Many prayers and words of encouragement as the project heated up again last fall
- Volunteers who helped design the new space and took ownership to doing the hard work
- Even MORE donations
- Even more patience as project challenges were worked through by the Kitchen Committee

...and now we have the blessings of a volunteer crew coordinating the Early Thanksgiving meal Sunday afternoon!

God has blessed us in numerous ways on this journey. So we will be focused on giving thanks the entire day. Right after the service we will have a short Open Forum with ministry leaders and workers report on the things happening in your St. John ministry, but will be strongly focused on the numerous things we are thankful for, including you!

I hope you can join us! We would love to celebrate our thanks with you as a ministry partner.