

Name: _____

Abiding Savior Free Lutheran Church Confirmation

Introduction to the Sacraments

After completing the lesson, the student will be able to:

- Be able to define the terms “sacrament” and “means of grace”.
- Identify the two sacraments of the Lutheran church.
- Identify the three components that make both Baptism and the Lord’s Supper a sacrament.
- Understand God’s pattern of using means to accomplish his purposes and using rituals to remind His people.

“The Word itself, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper are our morning stars to which we turn our eyes as certain indications of the Sun of grace. For we can definitely assert that where the Lord’s Supper, Baptism, and the Word are found, Christ, the remission of sins, and life eternal are found.”

— Martin Luther

INTRODUCTION

The Sacraments can be difficult to understand. However, don’t let this discourage you. It’s only difficult because it is hard to submit our reason to God’s Word. As we dive into learning about the Sacraments, we shouldn’t rely on our own reason or understanding, but we should rely on what God has given us in His Word, the bible! As we spend the next several lessons on the topic of the sacraments, there are a few things to keep in mind:

- First, we are living in a time and culture that is far removed from when Jesus lived and taught. Remember that Jesus was a Jew from the middle-east two-thousand years ago. We must be careful not to project our 21st century American assumptions upon the text of Scripture.
- Second, what we are teaching is not some new thing we thought up, but rather something that has been believed by the church since the first church in Acts. It isn’t something that Martin Luther or the Catholic Church of the Middle-ages thought up, it goes back to the Apostles themselves.
- Third, ask questions. If you don’t understand something, don’t just sit there... ask your parents, teachers, or pastors!

THE MEANS OF GRACE

Before we dive into the Sacraments, it is good to take a minute to be sure we understand the Means of Grace or, *how God gives us His grace*. As Lutherans, we recognize three Means of Grace:

1. God’s Word
2. Baptism
3. The Lord’s Supper.

Through these three “means”, God applies His grace and justification to you. We must remember that justification takes place not by **man**, but by **God**. Through the word of His promise, God Himself imputes

(or gives) to us the righteousness of Christ. Those who receive this promise by faith are those who are declared righteous. Again, *we* do not do this—**God** does!

God's Word is the primary Means of Grace, but we also recognize that God works in us through two secondary Means: both Baptism and the Lord's Supper. It is through the means of grace that God not only creates saving faith in Jesus Christ but also strengthens and preserves the faith of believers. A good way to understand the Means of Grace is by thinking about them as the “vehicle” or “way” that God applies His promises to you. Here are a few illustrations that might help:

Illustration #1: When you brushed your teeth this morning, you needed some water. How did that water get to your toothbrush and mouth? It came through a pipe; the pipe was the “means” or “vehicle” that brought the water to you.

Illustration #2: Electricity is produced at a power plant, just like Christ “produced” our forgiveness on the cross. Now how does that electricity get to you? Through power-lines and transformers. They actually carry the power to you! In the same way, God uses the Means of Grace to actually bring His forgiveness to *you*.

Illustration #3: Imagine that you break a promise you made to your friend Billy. He gets upset, and refuses to talk to you. One day, however, Billy is sitting alone in his room, and he decides to forgive you. But he gets busy and forgets to talk to you about it for a week. Question: are you forgiven even though you didn't know that Billy forgave you? Objectively, yes you are forgiven because Billy has already forgiven you. But subjectively, you are still living like you aren't. You are walking around with the guilt of knowing you betrayed Billy, and your relationship with him is still cut off. Until the forgiveness, that already exists, is brought to *you*, you will continue to live as though you're not forgiven. In the same way, God has already forgiven you when Jesus died on the cross. But we will live like it's not true until that forgiveness is brought to *you* by the Means of Grace.

1. What are the three Means of Grace?
2. Who is the one working in the Mean of Grace? Who is the one receiving the grace?
3. What is the primary Means of Grace? What are the secondary Means of Grace?

THE SACRAMENTS

We will be focusing specifically on two of the three Means of Grace over the next few Confirmation lessons: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We call them Sacraments. So, what is a Sacrament? Let's start with a definition:

"A sacrament is a holy act, instituted by Christ Himself, in which He gives and bestows His saving grace through the use of visible, material means."

As Lutherans, we recognize two Sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. So what do they have in common, or what makes both Baptism and the Lord's Supper a Sacrament? There are three things:

- 1) First, both are instituted or established by Christ Himself (Matthew 28:19).
- 2) Second, both use visible, material means (water in Baptism, and bread and wine in the Lord's Supper) (Ephesians 5:26).
- 3) Third, both give or bestow God's promise of saving grace, justification, the forgiveness of sins, and eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:26; Acts 2:38-39).

It is important for us to remember that the Sacraments were not invented by man, but rather, they are the means by which God has determined we receive His grace. The grace is given in the Sacraments through the word of promise, and the external means (water, bread, wine) serve as a seal to make this promise all the more sure to us. The sacraments offer the same grace and the same blessing which the Gospel (the Word) offers, but while in the Gospel this offer is broadly offered to all men, it is in the Sacraments applied and assured to the individual.

4. Write out a definition of a Sacrament.

5. What are the three components necessary to make it a Sacrament?

There are a couple of things that should be clarified before we move on:

1. **The Sacraments only work because they connect us to the Savior.** We will be saying things like "baptism saves" and "we receive forgiveness in communion." We are not saying Baptism is *another* way of salvation apart from faith in Christ. There is one salvation, and *that is Christ!* Baptism saves us because it brings us to the Savior. Remember that electricity example. The power lines are pointless unless they connect us to the source of the power.
2. **The Sacraments do not work apart from faith.** You can't run around the mall throwing water on people and crying out "I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!" It doesn't work that way. The sacraments are not magical things that work apart from faith, but rather work to *give* faith, work *through* faith, and work to *strengthen* faith. Listen

closely the next time a baptism happens in church. Notice the warning given, that: “this faith may be lost.” Just because we have been Baptized or have taken the Lord’s Supper, doesn’t mean we can go off and live however we want. This misses the whole point.

MORE THAN A SYMBOL

One thing that separates what we as Lutherans believe about the Sacraments from many other Christians comes when we ask the question “What do the Sacraments do?” For many protestant denominations, the Sacraments (or what they call “ordinances”) don’t do anything for us - they are only a symbol. In contrast, we believe that the Sacraments are “efficacious” - or that through these Sacraments, God is actually doing or accomplishing something in our lives. Throughout scripture we find that God has often used “means” (visible/material things) to accomplish his purposes. It’s not that he *needs* a physical object to do what he has planned, but he *chooses* to work through mundane, physical things.

7. Look up the following examples where God used means to accomplish his purposes. Write down (1) what or who God uses and (2) what God does or accomplishes.

Genesis 2:7

Exodus 4:2-5

Exodus 12:21-23

Exodus 17:5-6

John 9:6-8

8. List another example of God using a physical thing to accomplish His purpose when He could have used his power directly?

While we tend to emphasize in these lessons that the Sacraments are efficacious, we want to be clear that there is also an element of symbolism and remembrance in Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. God gives us physical things to do as reminders for us. This also, is a common event throughout scripture.

9. Look up the following passages and write what God instituted and why.

Genesis 17:10-11

Joshua 4:1-7

Numbers 15:37-41

STUDENT & PARENT QUESTIONS: *for the student and a parent to discuss and answer together*

1. When were each of you baptized, and at what church (I don't need an exact date... just what you remember)? If either of you haven't been baptized, discuss why. Briefly record answers below.

STUDENT & PARENT SIGNATURE:

By signing below, we affirm (1) this lesson is complete and that (2) we completed the "Student & Parent Questions" section together

Parent Signature: _____

Student Signature: _____