

The Assistant Pastor

March, 1941

The Means of Grace

WHAT SHOULD ADMONISH AND INCITE A CHRISTIAN
TO RECEIVE THE SACRAMENT FREQUENTLY?

I

Introduction

In the early Christian Church it was not necessary to discuss this question. For we read, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer" (Acts 2:42). The disciples well understood, and were mindful of, the words of their Master. "This do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me." Whenever those Christians gathered to hear the Word of God and to learn more of their blessed Savior and of His redemptive work, they also "broke the bread" (Acts 20:7), partook of the Sacrament in remembrance of their Lord.

Such frequent Communion was of spiritual benefit to those Christians. We find in them a strong, heroic faith, which triumphed over the persecutions they had to endure; a sincere brotherly love, which was ready to communicate to them that were in need; a holiness of life which set them apart from the world; an eager desire to make known the Gospel of Jesus to others. No, it was not necessary to admonish those Christians to receive the Sacrament frequently.

But in the course of time things changed. In 1530 Luther writes: "Now the people think so little of the Holy Sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord and act as though there were nothing on earth they needed less than this Sacrament. Still they want to be called Christians and imagine that, since they are free from the coercion of the Pope, they need no longer partake of the Sacrament but may dispense with it and despise it without sin."

But Luther reproves not only the people, but blames in part also the pastors who neglect to admonish their congregations as they ought. He says: "If we, then, who have the office and command become negligent and lazy in this matter, we shall have to wait long before the people will come of themselves."

Yes, in Luther's day it was necessary to admonish the Christians to receive the Sacrament frequently.

And how about us?

The Annual Report of the Norwegian Synod for 1940 reports that our Synod numbered 6,372 communicant members and that 9,080 persons received the Sacrament. This means that on an average each communicant partook of the Sacrament a little oftener than once during the year. But if we bear in mind that many devout Christians in our congregations go to Holy Com-

munion three, four, and five times a year, we must conclude that many do not go twice, perhaps not even once, to the Lord's Supper. Does this not show a very gross neglect of the Sacrament? Is it superfluous, then, in view of this deplorable situation to discuss the question, What should admonish and incite a Christian to receive the Sacrament frequently? Yea, should not each one ask himself, How often do I partake of the Lord's Supper?

It will not do to lay down a hard and fast rule, demanding that each communicant receive the Sacrament so and so many times each year. For whatever is accomplished by force of law in this matter is neither pleasing to God nor of benefit to us. For this reason Christ Himself did not say how often we should attend His Supper. But that He would have us come frequently, He clearly indicates saying, "This do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me." He certainly wants us to be frequent guests at this heavenly feast. However, the records show that the average attendance at Holy Communion in our congregations is very low.

II

What Prevents Us From Receiving the Sacrament Frequently?

1) **Worldly-Mindedness.**—Paul writes: "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2). But do we not find that for many of us temporal things and material advantages are more important and hence also more desirable than spiritual and eternal blessings? To be sure, among us this worldly-mindedness is not as crass and pronounced as among the children of this world. We still would be God's children; we have not fully discarded all hope of eternal salvation. Nevertheless, do we really always seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness? Is it really our chief concern that we remain in the faith and not lose the grace of God and the salvation of our souls?

Let us look about in our congregations; let us look into our own hearts. In what kind of things are we chiefly interested? The care for the physical well-being of our body, the desire for temporal advancement and success, our financial and business worries, our daily needs, so occupy our attention that we forget to watch for our souls. But also the pleasures of life divert our interest from spiritual things. Many of us are no longer as poor as our fathers were. We possess a sufficiency for our daily needs; we enjoy many comforts and conveniences. Life is so pleasant, so attractive, that we care for nothing better. We gaze at the flowers below and forget the stars above. As competence and wealth increase among us, there is also a noticeable shift of interest from spiritual and heavenly things to material and earthly things.

This accounts in a large measure for our neglect of the Lord's Supper, in which not material benefits but spiritual blessings are offered. At the same time this increasing worldly-mindedness in our congregations is also a result of our neglect of the Sacrament. For if we partook of the Holy Supper more frequently, our thoughts would again and again be turned from the things on earth that pass away to the things above that abide forever.

2) **Lack of a Live Knowledge of Our Sins.** Jesus

says: "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick" (Matt. 9:12). He who knows himself to be sick seeks counsel and help in his need. In the Sacrament Christ offers a sure cure to every sin-sick soul. But how little do we make use of this remedy? Do we fully realize how very sick we are? Yes, we have learned that we daily sin much. But how superficial and shallow is this knowledge? Does it really touch our heart?

We lead respectable lives before men; we are not as bad as others are. We are very much satisfied with ourselves and imagine that God also is well pleased with us. Each one of us is possessed with a goodly portion of self-complacency and self-righteousness, which we do not exactly care to admit, but which is there nevertheless. How often do we bow in penitence before our God, saying: "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned and done evil in Thy sight" (Ps. 51:4).

We are quick to discover the sins of others but are blind as to our own. Our own sins seldom appear to us in their true form and hideousness. We do not feel the wrath and curse of God and hence do not seek His grace and forgiveness in the Sacrament.

Our sense of sin is dulled by the lax views prevailing in the world. Many things which according to the Word of God are sins are in our day looked upon as something quite natural or as aberrations of a diseased mind. The adulterer acts on a natural urge; the murderer is temporarily insane. Such and similar views, published in our daily papers, warp our sense of sin. We apply them to ourselves and soon think that we are not at all as sinful as the Bible paints us. As a result we do not experience a great hunger and thirst for the forgiveness of sin offered to us in the Sacrament.

This lack of a true knowledge of our sins is no doubt a cause, but also a result, of our neglect of the Sacrament. For if we attended the Lord's Supper more frequently, we should also search our ways and examine our hearts oftener and thus learn to know our true condition.

3) **Lack of Understanding of the True Purpose of the Sacrament.**—The Sacrament of the Altar is not a sacrifice by which we atone for our sins, not a service which we render unto God. It is not an act of adoration in which we must occasionally participate, not a ceremony which is calculated by its liturgical forms to arouse our devotional emotions. It is something different, something greater. Like Baptism, it is indeed a Sacrament, in which God bestows on us glorious gifts of heaven and powers of eternal life. In the Sacrament we do not bring and give anything to God, but God comes and gives something to us. It is He that blesses, and we are being blessed.

But do we always look at it in this way? Is not our Communion to us sometimes merely a duty, a service, which we feel we must perform? Do we not often regard going to the Sacrament more as an obligation than as a privilege? Do we really understand and appreciate the blessing of this Supper? If a full dinner-basket were offered to each communicant, many would attend regularly. But Christ offers "meat that endureth unto eternal life," and we go barely two times a year. Do we really appreciate the blessing of the Sacrament?

4). Fear of Receiving the Sacrament Unworthily.

— Another, and quite different, reason why some stay away from the Sacrament is fear of possibly receiving it unworthily. Luther speaks of these people in the Large Catechism, Part V, 55. "But if you say How if I feel that I am not prepared? Answer: That is also my scruple, especially from the old way under the Pope, in which a person tortured himself to be so perfectly pure that God could not find the least blemish in us. On this account we became so timid that every one of us was instantly thrown into consternation and said to himself: Alas, you are unworthy! For then nature and reason begin to reckon our unworthiness in comparison with the great and precious good; and then it appears like a dark lantern in contrast with the bright sun or as filth in comparison with precious stones. Because nature and reason see this, they refuse to approach and tarry until they are prepared, so long that one week trails another and one half year the other. But if you are to regard how good and pure you are and labor to have no compunctions, you must never approach."

Also in our congregations there are timid souls who because of their sins and repeated lapses feel so utterly unworthy that they are afraid to partake of the Sacrament lest they eat and drink it to their judgment. But this type of unworthiness, which, like in the case of the publican, is really a deeply felt shame and sorrow over sin, does not render us unworthy of the Sacrament. It is rather to these poor troubled souls that Christ says: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

There may still be other reasons why attendance at Communion in our churches is so poor. Let each examine himself why he or she does not receive the Sacrament more frequently. For there are strong and compelling reasons why we should do so.

The essay, "What Should Admonish and Incite a Christian to Receive the Sacrament Frequently?" was written by E. W. A. Koehler. It is abridged somewhat here, and unchanged except for substituting statistics for the Norwegian Synod where the original essay had those of the Missouri Synod. Your Pastor urges you to read it earnestly and prayerfully. The essay will be concluded in the next issue of the Assistant Pastor.

Cletus Anderson and Laurine Robinson were united in holy matrimony at the Jerico church on February 10th at 6 P. M. The church was tastefully decorated for the beautiful candle light service. God bless and keep this bride and groom.

The Lenten Offering coin cards are being mailed to you together with an appeal from the Home Mission Board. The proceeds of this Synod-wide offering are designated for the cause of Home Missions. Without these gifts which you bring to your God, many church doors in our Synod would have to be closed. With your gifts, the officers of the Synod are enabled to call Pastors, and establish congregations where none were before. It is the Lord's work, and He promises a double blessing for each gift, a blessing for the giver as well as the receiver. You need God's blessing in your life and work.

The Assistant Pastor

Published and edited by the pastor of the Jerico and Saude Lutheran churches, affiliated with the Norwegian Synod of the Synodical Conference.

Church Directory

N. S. Tjernagel, Pastor

SAUDE CONGREGATION

Trustees: Chris Treider, Ned Borlaug, John Natvig.

Treasurer: Milton Boleng.

Secretary: Fred Steensland.

Cemetery Committee: Olis Borlaug, Juel Natvig, Miss Carrie Natvig, Mrs. John Natvig, Mrs. Otto Hanson.

Ladies' Aid: Mrs. Carl Miller, president; Mrs. Fred Steensland, secretary; Mrs. Otto Hanson, treasurer.

JERICO CONGREGATION

Trustees: C. Cutsforth, Lloyd Roberson, C. O. Vigdal.

Secretary: A. N. Anderson.

Treasurer: J. A. Robinson.

Cemetery Committee: Mrs. Theo. O. Knutson, Mrs. Thos. Roberson, Mrs. Carl Knutson.

Ladies' Aid: Mrs. S. T. Roberson, president; Mrs. Thos. Attleson, secretary; Mrs. Jeff O. Knutson, treasurer.

Services

JERICO

First and third Sundays 9:00 A. M.

Second and fourth Sundays 10:30 A. M.

(First Sunday Norwegian.)

SAUDE

First and third Sundays 10:30 A. M.

Second and fourth Sundays 9:00 A. M.

(First Sunday Bi-lingual Service.)

Fifth Sundays by special announcement.

NEW HAMPTON

Nils Orslevy, Pastor

Sunday School, 9 A. M.

Services, 10:30 A. M.

The Summer Schedule of Services will begin on the first Sunday in April. Kindly note the announcement in the heading of this issue of the Assistant Pastor.

Omar Roberson and Evelyn Cummings were united in marriage in a simple ceremony at the parsonage on February 18th. We wish them every blessing.

Our Saturday Schools are going in full stride. The attendance so far has been good, though there have been a few absences.

When I dismiss the classes on Saturdays, I always have the feeling that I have not had time enough with the children, time enough to go through their lessons properly. You who are parents must help me during the week. And you can do that not only by helping the children learn their lessons, but by explaining to them the meaning of the things they learn. Their study will profit them so much more if they understand the questions and answers they learn, and if they grasp the Bible stories they read. I am sure no one of you is too busy to give his child this help it so sorely needs.

And above all, bring your children with you to church. Any child old enough to go to school is old enough to profit by church-going. And regular attendance will give your child the habit of sancti-

fying the Lord's day by going to the house of God on Sundays. If he has not developed that habit before confirmation, it will be hard to develop it after.

Your child needs your help in so many ways. But most important of all it needs the good example of a Christian life which you can give it in your daily influence. If you help your boy and girl with his lessons, if you send them to Saturday school regularly, if you take them with you to church every Sunday, and then live every day in the faith of your church, and according to the precepts of the Bible, you have a right to hope that they too will be sincere Christians. But if your religious life is lax and careless you must expect the same from them. The word of God is plain: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Betty Ann Knutson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Orvin Knutson, was born January 19th, and was baptized at St. Joseph's Hospital in New Hampton, on February 7th. Sponsors were: Mrs. Caroline Vigdal and Miss Edna Knutson.

Allen Dean Borlaug, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ned Borlaug, received Christian baptism at the Saude Church on March 9th. He was born on February 9th. Mr. and Mrs. Milton Boleng and Joseph and Leona Vaala were sponsors.

Mr. and Mrs. Louie Paulson were guests of honor at a similar* occasion: their silver wedding anniversary, on Feb. 2. The celebration was held in the church parlors, there was a large company of people present, there was the same delicious food, the Pastor spoke words appropriate to the occasion; the two occasions were similar from the beginning to the final presentation of a purse to the guests of honor, and the cutting of the wedding cake.

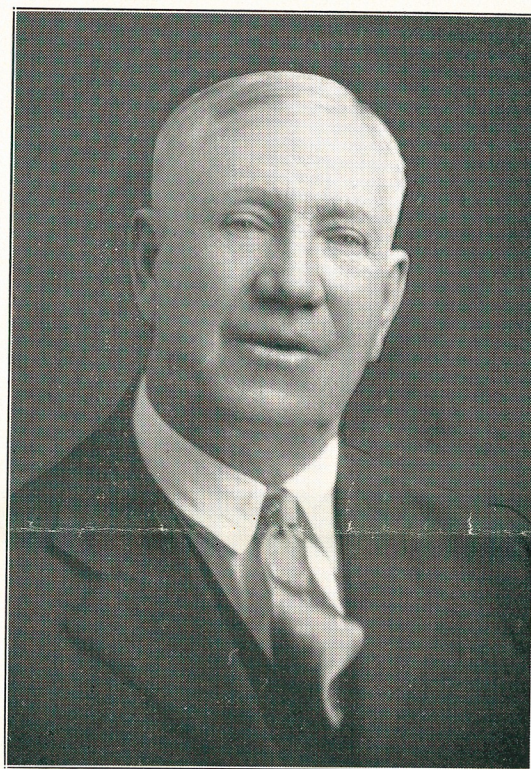
Mr. and Mrs. Paulson were married at West Prairie, Wis., on February 4, 1916, by the Rev. O. K. Ramberg. Both were brought up in the Jerico community, and have spent most of their lives there since. All their children were present at the anniversary. They are Orvin, Lucile, Alvin, Eileen, Harold, Lou Ann, also Clarice (Mrs. Alert Johnson). May God give them wisdom and strength in the years of their lives that lie before them.

Jack Johnson

On February 20th we laid to rest another of the good old men of the Jerico congregation. This time it was the mortal remains of Jack Johnson that made their way from his home to his church for the last time. He too had lived his lifetime in the Jerico community, and since childhood had been a member of the congregation that now gave him Christian burial.

The funeral sermon was based on the words of St. Paul recorded in Romans 8:38-39: "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus."

* Reference is to the golden wedding anniversary reported last month. This item was to have appeared then but lack of space prevented.



Jack Johnson

Jack Johnson was born in Jostedalen, Norway, on August 29, 1865. He was the youngest of ten children of Ole and Martha Johnson Teigen. He came to this country at the age of one and a half years with his parents who established their home in this community. He was confirmed at Saude by Rev. John Moses and was a lifelong member of the Jerico congregation.

He was united in marriage to Anna Melver on June 23, 1893. To this union were born ten children, two of which died in infancy. A son, John, died at the age of 27 years. His six sisters and three brothers also preceded him in death. On March 3, 1937, he suffered the first of a series of paralytic strokes. He had been confined to his bed since then. On February 5, 1941, he entered the Lutheran Hospital at La Crosse, Wisconsin, to undergo an operation. He passed away peacefully on February 17 from complications attending his operation.

He is survived by his wife and by the following children: Mary (Mrs. Nels Halvorson), who at present is a patient at Lutheran Hospital in La Crosse, and was unable to attend the funeral, and by Ole, Carl, and Alert of the home community, Esther (Mrs. Albert Ball), of Chickasaw, Alvin, of the home community, and by Andrew, who resides on the home farm. Also by 23 grandchildren, and many other relatives and friends. He was 75 years, 5 months, and 18 days of age at the time of his death.

We shall miss his jovial good humor, and his most contagious cheerfulness.