

Dearly Beloved,

Maybe this article will start a fire, but I'm not sure that anyone reads these articles anyways, and it's a slow day in the office, so here we go. One of the points of contention many have against the Missouri Synod is closed communion. So in this article I'll defend the practice of closed communion using an approach you probably have never heard before.

(Just a quick note before we get started - we need to define the terms. *Closed* communion means only members of a church body (i.e. the Missouri Synod) commune at that church body's altars. Some have tried to argue for *close* communion, thinking it sounds nicer, but taking one letter off (d) is an English novelty that first appeared in the 1920s. *Open* communion can be radically open (open to anyone, even non-Christians) or open to any baptized believer. I'm making a case that only those in fellowship with one other (i.e. members of Missouri Synod congregations) should commune at Missouri Synod altars, and only Catholics should commune at Catholic altars, and only Baptists should commune at Baptist altars. See? I don't want to commune at a Baptist altar, and it's not because I don't like grape juice.)

Here's the argument in a nutshell - would it kill you to actually believe in something? (The answer is yes, and as Christians we should gladly carry our crosses.) You know this - we've done away with any notion of truth in our society. I think a lot of the blame can be traced back to the philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) who radically altered the definition of truth. Here's how Aristotle rightly defined truth - there's a thesis and an antithesis. If the thesis is right, then the antithesis, the opposite is wrong. If I say that $2+2=4$, and you say that it equals 5, 4 is right and 5 is wrong. Hegel comes along and says, "Truth isn't that simple. We actually have to *synthesize* the thesis and antithesis together. So really $2+2=4.5$."

I see this Hegelian synthetic understanding of truth when it comes to communion. People will say, "Well, Methodists practically believe the same things, so they can commune with us." The problem is they don't believe the same things. They don't believe Jesus' body and blood is orally eaten and drank in the Lord's Supper. I'm not saying they're not Christians, but I am saying we have a different confession. To say that we have the same confession when we don't is lying, and that comes from the devil, the father of all lies. It dishonors Jesus, who is the Truth (John 14:6) when we lie and manipulate what truth is. Christians actually honor God and one another when we acknowledge those differences because that's saying what is true, and all truth is God's truth. I have more in common with a hardcore Baptist than I do with a lukewarm Lutheran who practices open communion, and that's because the hardcore Baptist and I actually believe in something.

Now maybe that's easy for you to stomach. 1 Corinthians 11 comes to mind, and you can see that communing with those who don't believe Jesus' body and blood are actually present in the

Lord's Supper is dangerous. But here's what really gets people in a kerfuffle - what about those who were confirmed in a Missouri Synod church and now go somewhere else, like an ELCA church?

The question I have is this, "So if you believe what the Missouri Synod teaches (simply that the Bible is the Word of God) then why do you attend an ELCA church (who doesn't take the Bible as the Word of God and openly promotes the rainbow and drag queen story hour for children sermons)?" Clearly we don't believe the same things, and so we don't have communion (see the word union in there) together.

People don't like closed communion because it actually makes a statement and might make people feel bad. Well someone better tell Moses or Elijah or John the Baptist or Jesus that they're making people feel bad.

Let's end on a positive note - the ultimate goal of closed communion is not to keep people away, but to say no so that we can eventually say yes. Despite what you might've heard, I don't have some kind of sick pleasure turning people away from the altar. Out of love, God says no right now so that we can "teach all things that [Jesus] has commanded us" (Matt 28) and eventually commune together.

If we're not comfortable confessing things that make people uncomfortable, then all hope is lost. But, if we acknowledge Jesus who is the Truth before others, then Jesus will acknowledge us before His Father.

In Christ,

Pastor Reber