Text: Q&TA 13-16

**Introduction**

So, the first cycle of questions of preparation spelled out the basic proclamation of the church. We are sinners in need of savior. That savior is Jesus Christ. The final question in that cycle was In whom do you Trust? With the answer being Jesus. If you don’t think you are a sinner, the supper is not for you. If your trust is in anything else, the supper is not for you. If you hope that your salvation can be found in the supper, you will find what you seek.

But that simple proclamation leaves a bunch unsaid. And the second cycle of questions started with the simple one Who is Christ? We can certainly be convinced that this man on the cross is our salvation, without knowing a whole lot about him. Because faith is the work of the Holy Spirit and is not dependent upon our mental faculties. But that doesn’t mean we live in ignorance. Part of the great commission that Jesus gave was to teach his disciples everything I have commanded you. And so the point of the second cycle of questions is the creed. God has revealed himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit – The Trinity; and there are two natures in one Christ who is true God and true man.

**Text**

This Christ left his church a new covenant, a last will and testament. That is the Lord’s Supper. In the sacrament, like the ancient Israelites who placed the blood of the lamb over their door post so that the angel of death would Passover them, we receive the blood of the lamb forgiving us and strengthening us for eternal life.

And where we left off last week is the first question tonight: Do you believe this? This is important. Because if we do not recognize the body of Christ, the sacrament is not for us. It is faith that receives the promise. Absent the faith the blood is more like the blood of Abel which testifies against us, as our sins have surely killed Christ. But unlike Abel, Christ offered himself willingly. As a song we will sing later says, “he though heavenly, high and holy, deigns to dwell with us most lowly.”

There are two things that would make me think that Luther himself had something to do with penning these questions and answer. The first is there constantly returning to the faith question. In whom do you trust? Do you believe this? Such faith was important to Luther. The second part is that Luther was never one to just leave it there. He would always ask the “Why should I believe this” question. And his answer was always consistent. What convinces me to believe this – that the body and blood of Christ are in the sacrament? And Luther’s answer is simple and yet profound. “The Word of Christ.” It is not looking within my heart. It is not some philosophical reason. Neither is it something as silly as a materialist scientific reason. You can’t take the wine and place it under a microscope. Believe comes from outside of us. God’s Word is spoken and it does not return to him empty, but accomplishes it’s purpose. And that purpose is to awaken faith. To bid the dead, rise. What convinces me to believe? The Word of Christ spoken to my heart stirring the Spirit.

The call of faith – our justification, is also always a call to action – our sanctification. And that I think ist he purpose of the next two questions. As the gathered who heard Peter preaching on Pentecost asked him, “what do we do?” So, what should we do when we eat His body and drink His blood and in this way receive His pledge? Luther’s answer is two fold. We should remember and proclaim. We remember what he has done for us. And we proclaim it, we confess it. But those words remember and proclaim are not just free floating. Because then we could attach them to something much nicer. What do we remember and proclaim? His death and the shedding of His blood. The cross. We remember and proclaim the cross. Which is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Cor. 1:18 ESV) We remember and proclaim the cross – a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the gentiles, but to those who are called…the power and wisdom of God. We remember and proclaim the cross, because this is not something that any of us would ever do. It is the work of God alone.

But why should be do this? He is risen after all. Why shouldn’t we be good Calvinists and insist that the cross is empty like the tomb. Why remember and proclaim His death?

The first answer is a reflection on the creedal answers. It is not the cross itself. Thousands of people were crucified by the Romans. What makes this one special that we remember him? This Christ is God and Man. This willing sacrifice is the only thing that could make satisfaction for our sins.

The second answer goes back to the first cycle of questions. We remember this death that we might be horrified by our sin. That we see how serious it is. Do we pass that cross unheeding, breathing no repentant vow? This is what we deserved.

But the third answer moves from pure remembrance to the proclamation. This cross is not just a grand demonstration of who God is – although it is that. Neither is this cross a demonstration of who we are – although it is that. This cross is given to us in the sacrament. We are buried with Christ in our baptism. This cross is traced on us in those waters. And the saving blood is traced on us in the sacrament. Only what your grace has taught us calms the sinners deep distress. And that grace is taught here, at the cross. Here we find not our condemnation, but joy and comfort in the Love of God. That while we were sinners he would die for us.

But that is trespassing on next week.