Text: CQ&A 19-20

**Introduction**

I wish I had a much more interesting ending for this mid-week series. But the final two questions to me are about practical matters.

**Question 19**

If you believe everything that you’ve answered in the self-examination up to this point, there really in only one conclusion: that I need the sacrament frequently.

Now frequently is left undefined here. In Luther’s Day it probably meant at least weekly. Although it might have meant more often. Whether it was the village church or a city Cathedral, the mass as even Lutherans would have still called it, was offered daily. To counter that you could look up the ancient canon law of the church that merely said one should go to confession and receive the sacrament at least yearly. The truth is that the definition of frequently probably varies person to person. There are some who might sing along with the old Spiritual “I Need Thee Every Hour.” And there are some who might honestly get by with that meets minimum requirements of the old canon law. Although I’d question the environment. That guidance was written for Christendom, not our modern Corinth.

As a piece of collective examination, we meaning Mt. Zion, must define frequently as every other week. The LCMS in convention urges congregations to offer weekly. I mention it here merely as future discussion. Most self-examination should lead to some ongoing sanctification.

But other than thinking a bit about the practical question of how frequent is frequent, the question returns us to the very beginning. What should admonish and encourage us to receive the Sacrament. Admonish and encourage – law and gospel language. And Luther leads with the gospel, the encouragement. Why should we receive? Because the promise of Christ the Lord. And what is that promise? That the sacrament is his true body and blood. That it is given for you. That is it for the forgiveness of sins. That is it the new covenant, the meal that testifies to Christ until he returns again. It is a means of grace in this world, a place where God himself has promised to be for all in need.

But maybe those promises are boring. Maybe they don’t ring out anymore. Why should we receive? The legal reason is simply our own pressing need. It’s a reminder of the first question of the examination – “Do you believe you are a sinner?” When confronted by our pressing need, made clear by the law, the gospel promise should be sweet relief. God has not let your need go without answer. He has given his Son.

**Question 20**

That last question of the self-examination has always been a strange one to me, but these days it seems to be the one on many believers lips. We might not put it in sacramental terms. We might ask something more like: “why do so many feel no need to come to church?” But I think it is the same question: what if I’m not aware of this need and have no hunger or thirst for the sacrament?

Luther’s answer tells us to look in three places. One of our great enemies has taken ahold of us if we do not recognize our need.

First might be our own flesh. Touch and see if you still have flesh and blood. If you are still in this body there are two things you should know. “The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit.” That’s the Galatians 5 point. And Paul would create quite a list of works of the flesh. And many people find ways to be completely lost in the flesh. Christian, you would do good to be aware of them. But the good news about still being in the flesh is that means it is the time of grace. Repent and walk by the Spirit. “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

The second enemy is the world. “He should look around to see if he is still in the world.” John says “for all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away.” Have such temporal desires completely separated us from the eternal? That is what the world will try to do. Run out the clock on you. But again the good news is that this world has been overcome. Christ is the firstfruits of the new creation – that new heavens and the new earth. And you are already in Christ.

The third enemy that might have us completely fooled is the devil. “Who with his lying and murdering day and night will let him have no peace.” He prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Maybe we feel no need because we despair of beating such a tyrant. But Christ our champion has already beat him. He’s judged, the deed is done. Take heart, in the presence of God – which we have in the sacrament – that old liar can no longer accuse the saints. He’s been hurled down.

**Conclusion**

So why might people not feel the need? The flesh, the world, or the devil has them. If you find yourself there and are hearing this. This is the word of God for you. Return. Repent and believe. For Christ is for you and you can overcome them by his grace.

As all who come to the table receive the victory . Amen.