

Bible e-Study - "Living Life Worshipping God" #3
Communion Vessels - Prayer

Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?
Romans 9:21

NUGGET – Following along the theme of a sanctuary set aside to remind us that the holy God of heaven comes to meet us, so also with some of the things we use as we worship. We set some things apart for use in our ceremonies that we don't use for other purposes. In our nugget verse today, St. Paul is using the analogy of the potter having the right to form pottery for his own specific use to talk about God's sovereignty in using wicked and faithful people so that He might display His mercy.

Without getting to far afield from our topic, it is important for us to be reminded that God alone is sovereign. Look at [Romans 9:16-24](#). There we glimpse that God is the only one who sees all. And according to what He desires for us to know He uses people, circumstances, weather, calamities, beauty, color, animals, rocks, trees, etc., and whatever He sees fit to display His power, righteousness, wrath, mercy, favor and love. God is the one who chose, in keeping with this section of Romans, to harden Pharaoh's heart so that we could learn of God's mercy to Israel. And mercy is what God has chosen to show to us in Holy Communion. God has chosen to make His mercy known to us through the body and blood of His Son in the bread and wine.

2 Timothy 2:20 says - ***In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and earthenware, and some for noble use, some for ignoble.*** In our house of worship we too have various vessels, some for noble use and others for ignoble. Again, what gives these vessels their designation is not that God has chosen them and told us to do so, but rather that we are using them to remind us of God's choosing to reveal His mercy to us through the most noble of all things, His Son's own body and blood, given for the remission of sins. So we set aside:

- Chalice, brass trays and flagon for holding the wine
- Paten for holding the host, the bread
- the white veil and purificators

These are the communion vessels chosen to be used for a noble purpose. They bring to our very mouths the forgiveness of God, won through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They are set aside for that purpose alone.

However let us use them also to remind us that we too are set aside for the noble purpose of bringing the Good News of the gospel to those in this world who are in such desperate need of it. We, like those vessels, are made noble by the purpose for which God in His sovereign choice has set us aside in Christ Jesus to be Hearing, Sharing and Living the Gospel

APPLICATION – Communion is the other sacrament that we celebrate.

1. Sometime offer to help in setting up or cleaning up these vessels. Handling them allows us to be mindful that, while set aside for a noble purpose, they too must be cleaned and properly maintained, like our own spiritual lives.

PRAY – Give thanks to God for setting you aside as one of His chosen and precious children. Thank Him also for using Holy Communion to feed and strengthen your faith.

GOING DEEPER

- iii. Communion vessels
- 2. *How Divine Service is done*
 - a. Church life
 - i. Word and Sacrament ministry
 - b. The Church Year
 - i. Pericopes
 - ii. Propers
 - iii. Prayers

As we've looked at the communion vessels and their purpose in the nugget section lets take few moments and define each one.

The chalice is the vessel or cup that holds the wine for Holy Communion. Chalice comes from the Latin calix and is commonly understood as the type of vessel used by Jesus for wine at the institution of the Eucharist.

The paten, like the chalice, is understood to be the type of dish used by Jesus for the consecrated bread. The paten today is used for wafer-bread or unleavened bread during Holy Communion. Now read [Matthew 26:26-29](#), [Luke 22:19-20](#), [Mark 14:22-24](#) and [1 Corinthians 11:23-26](#) Here we have the simple reason for the paten and the chalice, as in some form or fashion these would have been there.

The flagon is a storage vessel usually made of metal from which wine is poured into the chalice. The purificator is a square linen napkin used to clean the rim of the chalice during the distribution. A veil is a linen placed over sacramental vessels before and after Holy Communion. The brass trays holding the individual cups is a relatively recent invention.

The following is from an article on line - <http://sharperiron.org/article/who-first-adopted-individual-cups-as-regular-communion-practice> that provides a good background. *Up until the 1890s, Protestant churches throughout the world used common communion chalices. Some used just one, while others were known to use several in order to administer the fruit of the vine in a time-saving manner. However, churches using multiple chalices still had tens or perhaps hundreds of people sipping from the same cup during a communion service. In the late-nineteenth century, when outbreaks of diphtheria and tuberculosis were common, American sanitarians agitated to reform this religious practice—though no disease contraction had been linked to the use of a common communion chalice.*

Reformers proposed several alternatives such as intinction, individual fistulas or siphons, scalloped-rim chalices, and disinfectant cloths. However, among all proposals, individual cups emerged as the most popular method. Enough pastors and laymen became convinced of the sanitary need to use individual cups that the idea took hold, then rapidly spread into the twentieth century. This reform changed what was believed to be an almost 1,900-year-old method. Not until after WWII did the common cup give way to the individual cups in most Lutheran churches.

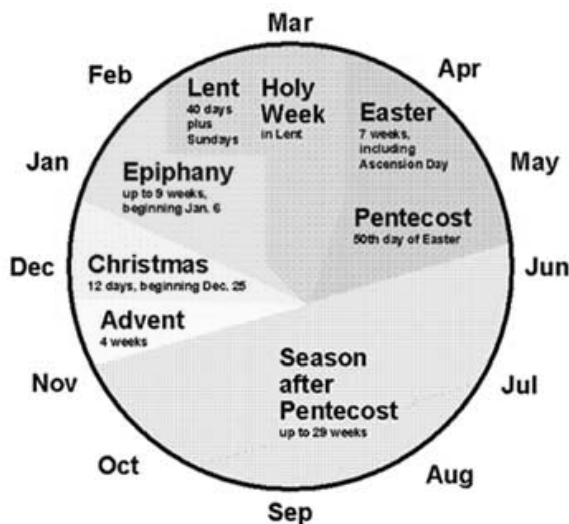
We turn now to consider the terms 'word' and 'sacrament'. In Jesus time on earth, much of it was spent around the dining table. He used that setting both to teach and share a meal together. Read [Luke 5:27-32](#), [Luke 9:10-17](#), for examples. We see Jesus using a meal to invite 'sinners' to be with Him, and then using His teaching to lead to a meal and the meal to teach. So also our worship, using word and sacrament reflect or mimic that rhythm that Jesus used and the welcome that Jesus demonstrated.

The Word refers to the fact that our liturgy points us to, and teaches us God's word, as Jesus taught. Sacrament refers to the fact that our liturgy points us to the use of His gifts of baptism and communion that we partake of as Jesus instructed us to do. The liturgy provides the framework by which these 2 things are distinguished and used as we receive them from God and then return a sacrifice of praise.

Word is of first importance, since all we believe and practice flow out of the Holy Scriptures by which God has chosen to reveal to us Himself and our relationship to Him. [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#) and [2 Peter 1:20-21](#) So we repeat His Word in our liturgy. And we hear His word proclaimed in the preaching. It is the word of God, the gift of Holy Scriptures, that enlightens, informs and grows the gift of faith we've been given by His grace.

As for the sacraments, it is the Word that combines with the elements that Christ told us to use, bread and wine in communion, and the water to in baptism. These we call sacraments because they have the power to deliver God's grace to each of us by combining those physical elements with His Word of promise attached to them. That is why word and sacrament define our worship and ministry.

Now, about the church year. This is important because it affects what we do in our liturgy, the rhythm of receiving from God His gifts and returning to Him our thanks, obedience and praise. It's helpful to think of the church year as something that has its own frame of reference to time; that it is 'out of time' so to speak.



The church year is divided into 2 parts. The festival half is first, also known as the high season, because it celebrates the life of Jesus. And, second, is the non-festival half and is characterized as the time of the church, and has the events of the church in the time of Acts as its focus.

The festival or high season begins with the first Sunday in advent. That Sunday is the beginning of the church year calendar; it is 'new year's day' for the church because it begins the time of anticipating the coming of Christ anew in our hearts and lives. Advent is followed by Christmas, Epiphany (the revealing of who Jesus is), Lent, Holy Week, Easter and its season, and the ascension.

Then comes the second half of the year, the 'church' half, beginning with Pentecost and the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit to the church. All of this is

important because it sets the agenda for what we will focus on in Holy Scripture for our worship services. That is communicated through the propers and the pericopes.

The pericopes are the selected readings from the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Gospels, that we use each Sunday. These are called pericopes because that word in the Greek means 'to cut around'. The selected readings are 'cut around' from the rest of the text and they guide our worship for that day.

These pericopes come from a source called the 'lectionary'. There are many different lectionaries in use and we use what is called the Revised Common Lectionary - 3-year cycle. (We're in year 'A' now and that will change to 'B' on Nov 30th) Lectionary is from the word, lection, which in Latin means 'to read'. So, a lectionary is a list of readings and the pericopes are the individual readings for an assigned day. (For an example of a lectionary turn to page 295 in the front of the hymnal.)

This ties into the church year because most lectionaries follow the seasons of the church year (see pages 8-9 in the front of the hymnal). So when we are in the festival half of the year, which covers the events in Jesus life, the lectionary follows that thread or theme of the life of Christ, especially in the gospel lessons and often with Old Testament lessons that support those texts.

So what are propers? The propers (pages 10-123) are a group of things that also follow the church year and thereby, provide variety in our worship. This group of things includes the pericopes for the day along with the gradual for the season, the introit for the day, the collect of the day, and the appointed verse for the day. We will be looking at each of these next session.