

## Study 2: Scripture and Real Presence – The mystery of God’s real presence in the Word, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper

### 1. What if we didn’t have “Real Presence” as part of valuing Scripture?

#### Read Matthew 15:1-6

In this story Jesus has a complaint against the church leaders of His time. He concludes, ***you nullify the word of God for the sake of your traditions.*** He notices that the compassion of God is missing. No... Worse... God is missing! No REAL PRESENCE!

How can we read the Word of God and leave God out!

- think of church rules and actions by pastors, or those with authority, or who have been members for some time, that may make people feel excluded.
- can you remember saying or thinking anything that would have the same effect?

Having admitted fault, what hope now do YOU have?

- that’s where the real presence of our compassionate God is our only hope!
- when merciful God is really present, you don’t need to be afraid of your failure! In Romans 7 Apostle Paul describes the struggle – ***who will rescue me from this body of death?*** But then concludes simply with, ***Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!***

#### Read Luke 18:9-14

*(how God thinks differently than the so-called ‘good’ Pharisee about the so-called ‘bad’ publican)*

Notice how, when God is present, the so-called ‘bad’ person doesn’t miss out! Because when you know God, you know mercy (read 1 Peter 2:10).

The grace of God is such a mystery to us. It is SO good for us. So freeing. So undeserving. And so easy for us to not get it right as we look at others (and therefore ourselves!). So Luther reminds us, in all humility we are like one beggar showing another where to find bread. And our REALLY PRESENT compassionate, God knows how to handle that!

### 2. The mystery of the Gospel and God’s real presence

A mystery is something that YOU cannot control. It is not like a secret. Once you discover a secret the secret is over. But with a mystery, the more you look into a mystery, the better, deeper, more valuable it becomes. The Word of God is like that. God’s presence, acting for you, in the Word is like that!

Read Matthew 22:10

How surprising the work of the Gospel is! That God would invite ‘bad’ people! “I would have never guessed!” But we shouldn’t be surprised, Matthew 22:10

reminds us of God's heart and compassion when it says that **both good and bad** filled the heavenly guest room! Isaiah said, **His understanding no one can fathom** (Isaiah 40:28c). And as Apostle Paul quotes Isaiah in Romans 10:20 **I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.**

Have you been surprised by the joy of being found by God?  
Discuss this. Pray about/for this.

### 3. **The mystery of God's real presence in the Word, Baptism and the Lord's Supper – something to ponder and discuss**

As a human being, Jesus lived life just as God intended humans to live. He then took on our sin and put it to death on the cross. And because He was innocent of it He was raised to life. The Holy Spirit works in our hearts to believe that we are now in God's family because of Jesus' death and resurrection. We too now live with innocence and blessedness.

God does this, and continues to grow us in this, sacramentally.

The word 'sacrament' comes from the Latin 'sacramentum' which means 'mystery'.

It is a MYSTERY that God is REALLY PRESENT and connects with us...

- in the words of the Bible, the WORD OF GOD. Ephesians 6:19c actually uses the word 'mystery' when it speaks of the Gospel.
- in BAPTISM. Romans 6:3,4 tells us that we are tied to JESUS – tied to Jesus' death and resurrection in our baptism.
- and in the LORD'S SUPPER we actually receive the body and blood of Jesus in a way that He has said, **take and eat, this is my body, take and drink, this is my blood...**

They are ALL sacramental – the mystery of God being present and coming to and into us. It is a mystery that sinners are now saints! It is a mystery how God handles that, as He guides and feeds us as His children throughout our life.

Because these three (Baptism, Lord's Supper, Word of God) are a mystery OF GOD, we are always on the receiving end! THEY work on us. THEY bring God to and into us.

GOD IS PRESENT. We don't tell Him what to do! We simply receive His grace and mercy as He makes His home in us! As Jesus said, **Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.** John 14:23

For your further pondering...

The consolation of Christian sisters and brothers in the forgiveness of sins found in Jesus, is also a sacramental expression of God at work in His Word.