



## Benedicamus and Benediction

*“Too soon we rise; the vessels disappear;  
The feast, though not the love, is past and gone;  
The bread and wine remove, but Thou art here;  
Nearer than ever; still my shield and sun.”*

(LSB 631, verse 6).

**A**s the distribution of Holy Communion wraps up, it is a sad thing to see the vessels covered once more. The feast of love is drawing to a close... for now! But that does not mean that Christ’s wondrous presence is gone. Far from it! Jesus’ body and blood which have nourished us in this sacred meal has done its work, bringing us every good gift of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, forgiving us and renewing us. We are made holy in the blood of the Lamb! And Jesus now goes with us into the beginning of our work week from here on!

To emphasize this important fact, as the Divine Service draws to a close, there is a curious exchange that takes place between Pastor and people gathered at Christ’s altar.

*P The Lord be with you.*

**C And also with you.**

*A Bless we the Lord.*

**C Thanks be to God.**

Not every line is used each time, but it is a reminder that even though the vessels of the Sacrament are now put away, that doesn’t mean Jesus has gone away. The Lord is with YOU! Jesus is still here! With you! And He goes with you out the doors of the church into your everyday life to bless you as you go through whatever it is you face day by day.

This is a tremendous truth to hold onto. Sunday morning isn’t the only time where Jesus’ mercy is extended to you. Every day is! You are baptized into Christ! You are a new creation! Your sins are forgiven day by day, moment by moment for the Lord your God is with you every step of the way.

In Medieval times, the priest would usually end the service with these sentences and simply say,

“Ite missa est.” You are dismissed. The service is over. Luther didn’t want it to end this way. In Luther’s revision of the Divine Service he offered that the benediction from Numbers chapter 6 could be used:

*The LORD bless you and keep you.*

*The LORD make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.*

*The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and cross + give you peace. Amen.*

This is the only benediction of blessing the Lord God ever prescribed for use, and Luther believed that it would be a fitting ending to the Divine Service, for as the Lord Himself said in regards to this benediction: *“So shall [Aaron and his sons, my priests] put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them,”* (Numbers 6:27 ESV).

With this benediction the Lord our God places His Triune name upon us one more time. The Pastor stands before you with outstretched hands, palms open to the people, to put on God’s people His holy name! During the last line, the sign of the cross is made, linking everything back to our baptism where we first were given God’s holy name. God’s holy name, put upon you once more as you make your way into the rest of the work week.

Start to end, the Divine Service is about God’s work and action for you. Your Triune God keeps on giving to you! Our response throughout is one of thanksgiving and praise, but most of all, in simply receiving that which our Lord wants to give to us time after time after time!

All glory be to God alone!

In Christ’s service,  
Rev Joel V. Kuhl, Pastor