The preparations of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.
All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the spirits.
Commit your works to the LORD, and your thoughts will be established.
The LORD has made all for Himself, yes, even the wicked for the day of doom.
Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; though they join forces, none will go unpunished.
In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity; and by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil.
When a man's ways please the LORD, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.
Better is a little with righteousness, than vast revenues without justice.
A man's heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps. [Proverbs 16:1-9]

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

The preparations of the heart belong to man,
But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.

No man can live without working, without giving his heart to planning, suffering, and hoping. How will you judge these things, measure them, share in them? You can't ignore them. You dare not get tangled up in them as though they're the goal of life. What on earth will we do with the planning and affairs of life? The answer comes from *the tongue of the LORD*.

Take for example the Lord's Supper. Christians don't keep the Feast week after week in a way that tries to escape the hard work of daily life. The Holy Communion isn't an escape from the responsibilities of life. It's the way God cuts your hearts free from entanglements so that you can engage in daily work with detached hearts! The one whose heart is entangled in getting bread, butter, security, success and immortality through earthly things, is precisely the one whose heart is not free in his work. He's always looking to achieve some other goal by his work. And the goal he imagines is the betterment of himself: he's not free to seek God's glory or his neighbor's benefit. The community of saints is free because God's cut us free by the death of Christ and raised us through baptism to the hope in Christ's return. Thus the hearts of God's people are free to carry out the daily work of life — not to gain for themselves, because in Christ God has already given us all we need — but to labor as God's co-workers, to praise and thank Him for His goodness and mercy toward us, and by submitting to our neighbor in love.

Sinful men turn away from this into idolatry over bread and wine. They anchor their hearts to bread and to its security; they crave it because of their fear or greed, lust or hate. Men fight over bread, its production, distribution, and control. Men make it the grand goal of all their work and men are heartbroken and anxious when the bread of their life is threatened. It was around food that Satan organized his first attack on man to get him to use food under the word of Satan, to frustrate God's purposes for man. The Second Adam, Jesus Christ, in the wilderness was confronted by the Deceiver with the same simple yet fate-full choice. And so are you!

But where you always choose to give in to the temptation, He stood firm. The devil dangled all the riches and glories of this world in front of Jesus for one moment of faithlessness, one bit of worship. *"All these are yours if you bow down and worship me."* Jesus resisted. *"You will worship the LORD your God, and Him alone will you serve,"* He said. Jesus was faithful. He served His Father alone with a single-minded service. He did it in our flesh and blood, as one of us, for us.

Where you love bread and its security, Jesus loved the Father. Where you pursue comfort, He went to the cross. Where you look for profit, control, and gain, Jesus took loss. Where you gladly bow down to the devil for little more than a sampling of this world's riches and security, Jesus renounced this world's riches and worshipped God. Where you are faithless in little, He is faithful in much. Where you delight yourself in power and wealth and fame, He delights in righteousness and faithfulness and love.

What you praise and esteem as the great goals of life is despised by God. And it is conversely true as well, what is praised and esteemed by God is despised by you. Jesus, crucified, risen, and ruling at the Father's right hand, highly esteemed in the sight of God yet despised and ridiculed in the sight of men. That you, a sinner, are justified before God not by who you are or by what you do but solely by trust in who Jesus is and what He has done. This is despised by you and esteemed by God.

In the end, and there is a coming end, when bread and its security fails, when the economy collapses under the weight of its own greed, when the idol of Mammon is finally exposed as the worthless fraud that it is, when you have lost everything including your own life, there at that end is only Jesus who will not fail you, who will welcome you to His table, to an eternal feast that He prepared for you by trading out His life for your life.

You are baptized into Him. His life is yours. His faithfulness is yours. His kingdom is yours. You literally have nothing to lose, even if you die as a beggar like Lazarus. Having nothing to lose, being dead to this world and dead to yourself, turns out to be the freest position there is.

It's like the parable of the man in the ditch and the good Samaritan. Only one who is free from the Law can actually do the Law. Only as you are free from your greed, fear, and lust for daily bread and hold it in a dead hand of faith, can God actually detach your heart from the things of this life which bar you from freely thanking and praising Him and serving your neighbor.

And you are that free, dear baptized child of God. In Christ, you have the bread of heaven offered through God's faithfulness to you. In Christ, you have an eternal food that satisfies you. In Christ, you have been given a place at His table that will never be offered to someone else. In Christ, you are a servant of God, disentangled from the anxiety which accompanies the threats

to your daily bread. This calls for hope, the hope that clings to the good name of Jesus and lives as though you have nothing to lose. But the reality is that your hearts are divided, and you try to serve two masters hoping they don't recognize one another. You put in your *"God-time"* like the Israelites in days of the prophet Amos, and then it's back to business as usual.

"You justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts." He knows what's going on with you. He knows your fears, loves, and trusts. If you fear losing your daily bread you will feed yourself with your greed and discontent over not having enough bread so that this is finally what you become — greed. You become what you *"eat"* — and I'm not talking only about groceries. Jesus says to you. *Take eat; take drink.* In this wonderful mystery, in the power of His own act of love, He shapes you by feeding you on Himself. And He not only feeds you on His Body; He builds you into His Body!

The preparations of your heart may drive you to fear or greed, lust or hate but the Word of God, Jesus Christ, stops you dead in your tracks with the words, *"Take eat; this is my body. Take drink; this is my blood given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins...* In short, *a man's heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.*

The LORD directs you to His font, His preacher, and His table where He cuts you loose from all your planning, suffering, and hoping, to receive from God's own mouth the answer, the Word of God that you need to sustain body and soul, in death and life, now and forever ... *this is the blood of Christ shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.* Amen.