FOUNDATION SESSION 3 — HOW GOD COMES TO US

“The Way of Grace”: God For You

SESSION OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants should be able to:

1. Explain what the **Means of Grace** are and why they matter.
2. Understand how God gives forgiveness, life, and salvation through **the Word, Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and Forgiveness (Absolution)**.
3. See worship not as something we do for God, but what God does for us.
4. Recognize how the Means of Grace shape the rhythm and mission of Chesapeake Community of Hope.

Reflect:
List ways you normally feel ‘close to God.’ What practices, places, or experiences make God feel present?

Follow-up:
What if God’s presence didn’t depend on our feelings or spiritual intensity—but on His promises?

Consider:
Lutheran theology teaches that God does not wait for us to climb up to Him. Instead, He comes down to us through specific, concrete, reliable means.

CORE TEACHING CONTENT

A. What Are the Means of Grace?

Definition:
The Means of Grace are the ways God **delivers** His forgiveness, life, and salvation to us.

They are:

1. **The Word (Written, Preached, Spoken)**
2. **Baptism**
3. **The Lord's Supper**
4. **Absolution**

These are not symbols of grace or reminders of grace—they **are** God's grace given to us.

Key Scripture:

- Romans 10:17 — Faith comes from hearing.
- Titus 3:5–7 — "He saved us… by the washing of rebirth."
- Matthew 26:26–28 — "This is my body… this is my blood."
- John 20:22–23 — Forgiveness spoken by Christ's authority.

Notes:

- God loves to work through physical things: words, water, bread, wine, human voices.
- Christianity is an incarnational faith—God works through tangible means because He made us tangible creatures.

B. The Word of God (Preached, Written, Spoken)

What it does:

- Kills (Law)
- Makes alive (Gospel)
- Creates and strengthens faith
- Comforts the broken
- Guides the believer
- Reveals Christ

Key Scriptures:

- Hebrews 4:12 — Living and active Word.
- Isaiah 55:10–11 — God's Word accomplishes His purpose.
- John 5:39 — Scriptures testify to Christ.

Notes:
Every sermon, Bible reading, and devotion is an encounter with Christ.
The Word is not inspirational content—it is God acting.

C. Baptism: God's Promise with Water

What God does in Baptism:

- Forgives sins
- Joins us to Christ's death and resurrection
- Grants the Holy Spirit
- Makes us His children
- Gives a new identity
- Brings us into the Church

Key Scriptures:

- Matthew 28:19 — Baptizing in God's triune name.
- Romans 6:3–5 — United with Christ in death and resurrection.
- Acts 2:38 — Forgiveness and the Holy Spirit.

Notes:
Baptism is not something we do for God—it is something God does for us.
It is a daily reality (Romans 6), not a one-time spiritual event.

D. The Lord's Supper: Christ's Body & Blood "For You"

What Christ gives in the Supper:

- His true body and blood
- For the forgiveness of sins
- For strengthening faith
- For unity with the church
- For life and salvation

Key Scriptures:

- 1 Corinthians 10:16 — Participation in Christ's body and blood.
- 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 — The apostolic tradition of the Supper.

Notes:

- The Supper is not our remembrance of Christ only—it is Christ's presence for us.

- The key Lutheran phrase: **“In, with, and under the bread and wine.”**

E. Forgiveness (Absolution): Forgiveness Spoken Into Ears

Definition:
Absolution is the technical term for the announcement of forgiveness in Christ’s name.

Key Scripture:

- John 20:22–23 — Jesus gives the church the authority to forgive sins.
- James 5:16 — Confess and receive healing.

Notes:
Pastors and Christians in community—speak forgiveness that Christ Himself has authorized.
Forgiveness is not a feeling; it is a proclamation.

F. Why the Means of Grace Matter

1. They give assurance.

Your faith doesn’t depend on your emotions—it depends on God’s promises.

2. They make the Gospel personal.

Not “Christ died for the world,” but “Christ died **for you**.”

3. They shape worship.

Worship is not about us impressing God.
Worship is about God serving us.

4. They center everything on Christ.

Not our effort, but God’s action.

SCRIPTURE CONNECTIONS (Optional Reading)

- John 1:14 — The Word became flesh.
- 1 Peter 3:21 — “Baptism now saves you.”
- Luke 24:30–32 — Christ revealed in the breaking of bread.
- 2 Timothy 3:14–17 — Scripture as God’s breathed Word.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. **What is different about a God who comes down to us vs. a God we have to climb up to?**
2. **Which Means of Grace have been most meaningful in your life? Why?**
3. **What questions do you still have about Baptism or the Lord’s Supper?**
4. **How does viewing worship as God serving us change your understanding of Sunday mornings?**
5. **Which promise of God do you need to “hear again” right now?**

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

A. Worship Intentionally

- When you come to worship, ask:
  “What is God giving me today?”

B. Daily Dying & Rising (Baptism)

- Begin your day with the reminder of your identity in Christ. Every time you wash your hands remember your sins are washed away.

C. Scripture Rhythms

- Choose one Gospel passage each week and ask:
  “What is Christ giving here?”

D. Confession & Forgiveness in Relationships

- Practice naming sins and speaking forgiveness at home, in family, or in close friendships.

SESSION SUMMARY

- God comes to us through **His Word, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Forgiveness**.
- These Means of Grace deliver forgiveness, life, and salvation.
- Worship is God's action—not ours.
- God uses physical, tangible things to reach us because He delights in meeting us where we are.
- The Means of Grace shape the heartbeat of Chesapeake Community of Hope.

---

9. HOMEWORK

From Luther's Small Catechism, read:

- **Baptism (all four parts)**
- **The Sacrament of the Altar (all five parts)**

Reflect:
Which promise of Baptism or the Lord's Supper do you need most this week?

What is Baptism?
Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God's command and combined with God's word.
Which is that word of God?
Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matt. 28:19)

What benefits does Baptism give?
It works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.
Which are these words and promises of God?
Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16)

How can water do such great things?
Certainly not just water, but the word of God in and with the water does these things, along with the faith which trusts this word of God in the water. For without God's word the water is plain water and no Baptism. But with the word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in Titus, chapter three: "He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He

poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying." (Titus 3:5–8)

What does such baptizing with water indicate?
It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.
Where is this written?
St. Paul writes in Romans chapter six: "We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." (Rom. 6:4)

What is the Sacrament of the Altar?
It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself for us Christians to eat and to drink.
Where is this written?
The holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and St. Paul write:Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."
In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

What is the benefit of this eating and drinking?
These words, "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins," show us that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?
Certainly not just eating and drinking do these things, but the words written here: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." These words, along with the bodily eating and drinking, are the main thing in the Sacrament. Whoever believes these words has exactly what they say: "forgiveness of sins."

Who receives this sacrament worthily?
Fasting and bodily preparation are certainly fine outward training. But that person is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins."
But anyone who does not believe these words or doubts them is unworthy and unprepared, for the words "for you" require all hearts to believe.