

Let us lift up the cup of salvation.

The Israelites were freed from the chains of slavery in Egypt for a purpose, so that they could serve the Lord in the land He would give them. We have been freed from the chains of slavery to sin for a purpose, so that we can serve the Lord by proclaiming His glory in the presence of others.

We can never repay God in the sense that we can do enough to compensate the Lord adequately for what He has done for us. But we can repay Him in the sense that we honour Him with love and gratitude, which is an appropriate expression of thanks for what He has done.

We do this when we joyfully celebrate the salvation He has given to us. In our Introit for today, Psalm 116:1-14, we have the words, “I shall lift up the cup of salvation,” (v. 13). These words are often interpreted as a reference to the cup of wine used at the Passover and other festive meals. This expression may include an allusion to that custom, but it is basically a figurative expression for everything we do that celebrates and proclaims our appreciation for God’s salvation. The cup of salvation is God’s gift to us. Lifting the cup is our celebration and proclamation of God’s gift. The Passover meal was one way Israel remembered and proclaimed God’s work of salvation.

Our celebration of the Lord’s Supper includes such remembrance and proclamation of Christ’s work for our salvation. In fact, all our public worship serves this purpose. One reason we regularly attend public worship is to declare to others our appreciation for salvation. Every act of public worship is a visible sermon that proclaims our thankfulness for all that God has done.

The ancient Israelites often took vows to perform some specific act of thanksgiving if God answered their prayers. We seldom use such vows today. But on the day of our confirmation, we did vow that our lives would be a fitting response of thankfulness for the salvation God has given us. We vowed to be faithful in our use of the Word and sacraments. We vowed to strive to live our lives according to God’s Word. We vowed that with God’s help we would be faithful even unto death. Let us renew our dedication to fulfilling those vows in the presence of God’s people. This is the thank offering by which we can “repay to the LORD... all the good that He has done to (us),” (v. 12).

O Fount of good, for all Your love
How shall our debt be paid?
What can we offer, Lord, to you
Who all the worlds have made?

Hymn 816, v.1