

Lenten Midweek – 2021
Blessings in the Blood of Christ
The Blood of Christ Purifies
Hebrews 1:1-14
Hebrews 9:6-14

How many vitamins does the body need? I had no idea so I googled it. Now I'm an expert. "There are 13 essential vitamins — vitamins A, C, D, E, K, and the various B vitamins (thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, pantothenic acid, biotin, B₆, B₁₂, and folate). Vitamins have different jobs to help keep the body working properly."

I love the internet. It so full of truth and unvarnished bits of wisdom. I completely trust everything that I read on the internet. At least when it comes to vitamins. This is what the interweb said: "The best approach to ensure you get a variety of vitamins and minerals, and in the proper amounts, is to adopt a broad healthy diet. This involves an emphasis on fruits and vegetables, whole grains, beans and legumes, low-fat protein, and dairy products."

A broad and healthy diet... that's cool. Let's all try to have that. When I was kid, my mom was big on vitamins, the pill variety. So, to this day I take a vitamin, which is chock full of those thirteen essentials, and then I feel like I'm good to go. Centrum is a top seller. "Respond to your body's needs with Centrum—nutritional supplements thoughtfully formulated with quality vitamins and minerals to meet your wellness goals." Some genius in Centrum's marketing department wrote that. Vitamins: they've got vitamins for kids called "Smarty Pants" which, if your youngster takes them will make them smarter than the average bear. Mega Men is for guys who need a little extra help for colon and prostate health. One a Day for Women promotes bone health, heart health, skin health and immune health. I prefer the Swiss Army Knife variety – a vitamin that does everything.

Purity; is there a vitamin that will make me pure? Having read the Bible, I see that God is interested in purity – of heart and mind and conscience. God is interested in *you* being pure. In fact, He demands it. Defiled; that is the opposite of being pure. Vitamins are flying off the shelves. A huge market has erupted since I was a lad. Not a one of them can make me pure. Is purity even a quest that man is on? Is it something you desire? Where do you find it? Why is the blood of Christ not flying off the church's shelf? Purity; it is found nowhere else. Christ's blood is our Swiss Army Knife – it does so much! It makes us holy, it purifies our conscience, it opens heaven, it brings forgiveness, it speaks on our behalf, it redeems us from sin, death, and hell. All the essentials of our body and soul are located in Christ's blood. Purity; He is the One to whom absolute purity belongs. Not an off-putting, aloof, and judgmental purity but a compassionate, graceful and accessible purity. He shares what belongs to Him.

Defiled; have you ever felt defiled? In your spirit, in your flesh, in your conscience – soiled by your bad behavior, rendered defiled by what someone else has done to you – have you felt that? I have. I know that guilt, that loss, that pain. Being defiled and being aware of it. What comes next is a bad conscience, one that leads further away from God. A bad conscience, one that does not function the way that God intends. A bad conscience is the product of the defilement of our soul which sin brings. Others typically can't see it, but as believers, as those who are familiar

with our own behavior, we feel it, we know it, we suffer it... and, unfortunately, sometimes we simply get used to it, get comfortable with it. There is great danger there. Repentance; it is to be awakened in us all.

There is a biblical character to whom we can all relate. We are so very much like her; she is so very much like us. A prostitute; not the Pretty Woman variety, not the Hollywood trope of a woman who is bursting with inner virtue and stands as an icon of plucky, blue collar inventiveness. No, this woman was soiled, defiled, and she knew it. She had no purity of her own; she knew that as well. No store, no vitamin, no diet could address her need.

Her conscience; think of her conscience – convicting her day after day, without relief. Purity; do you think this woman longed for what was radically absent from her heart, her mind, her soul? Where would she find it? How could she procure it? Has that absolute need ever gripped your mind? What a gift purity is – freedom, relief, joy, a new day, a new spirit, a new future – purity brings those gifts, a clean conscience, a conscience prepared to serve the living God, a conscience that eagerly chooses the right, a conscience that predictably chooses the right. Purity; who here wants it?

She brought her alabaster jar of ointment to Christ. This prostitute, this defiled creature poured out her gift in shameless humility on the Lord's blessed feet. His blood is where the defiled find purity and freedom and newness of soul and mind and conscience. This defiled woman let down her hair and kissed His feet and honored the One who would take her defilement into His flesh as He hung on the cross. Crucified, His blood pours out to cleanse your conscience, to bring you purity, to set you free from your sin. She loved much. That defiled creature loved much for she had been forgiven much. She loved much for she knew that Christ gave her something that she could find nowhere else... purity. Not based on her behavior, not won by an excellent prayer or a selfless gesture or transformation of lifestyle, but simply by grace, by sacrificial love for the lost, by a divine will to give to those who are made in His image.

The blood of Christ purifies. Nothing else in this world does – Christ's blood. God's blood, holy blood, righteous blood, blood of the crucified and risen Savior – it purifies – any and all, the defiled of every race and nation, the defiled of every age and status, the defiled who are weak and the defiled who are strong. The blood of Christ purifies our conscience so that it begins to work properly, so that it begins to serve the living God and pursue His will. Get this, for its totally important: "a bad conscience only does good out of selfish fear of punishment or selfish hope for reward." A clean conscience engages in truly good works naturally, out of love for God and love for neighbor. Christ's blood leads there. That is the place Christ's blood leads. Purity; a clean conscience leads us away from dead works to serve the living God in truth and in love, sacrificially, as our Lord did, as our Lord continues to do.

The blood of Christ purifies and you drink that blood. Love rendered Himself up on the Holy Cross. All the defilement of your past, your present, and your future sins He welcomed into His pure person. Love took it – all that is ugly, and foul, and reprehensible – what you have done, what others have done to you (your shame and your guilt), He took it. Pure Him took what is wretchedly unholy... in order to make you pure. Christ's purity is the commodity that the church dispenses and you are a recipient of it, in this age, at this altar, with these other believers.

More than vitamins, your body needs this blood. What a blessing it is that Christ serves you with His purity and you welcome the gift with thirsty mouths and trusting hearts. His name is hallowed as you drink His blood. His kingdom comes as you drink His blood. His will is done as you drink His blood. What He wills to give invades your being and you are made pure. What God demands, God most certainly provides. Blessed Lord, grant us your purity, grant us your love, grant us the remarkable blood of your holy Son, the Crucified, our King.