When I was a lad, with my father I would go to the city’s butcher shop. (This was before meat was pre-packaged and lying neatly on the shelves in the meat department of supermarkets.) It was always fascinating for me to enter that establishment. Men would have white hats on their heads. They would wear their white aprons that were covered with the stains of blood and what looked to me like little pieces of raw meat. And, if I looked through the meat case window just at the right angle, I could see through the large window behind the customer counter, men swinging vicious looking meat cleavers, while other men were sawing bones with their special bone saws and slicing the freshly cut meat with an assortment of sharp knives both long and short. Where they were working, the floor was covered with scattered saw dust that absorbed the blood that inevitably fell and dripped from the slaughtering tables. The place had a peculiar, unique smell to it. People would stand in line waiting for their turn to tell one of the butchers what particular cut of meat they wanted. A butcher would wrap up the meat in the special butcher paper that was in a huge roll after ripping a sheet across a large blade. Then he would tie the package with a string that was suspended from some metal arm attached to the top of the meat case. The meat order was never taped; it was always tied with what looked to me like special string. It would be weighed on a big scale that had a large black needle that bobbed back and forth, from left to right and then right to left for a few seconds. Then my father would pay for the purchase and we would leave.

That scene has been indelibly seared into my memory for decades. I suppose that I shall never forget it.

Not far from that meat shop was another shop – a poultry shop. Actually, it was a chicken shop where fresh chickens were slaughtered “out back” behind the main store. The smell of that place was horrible. But people by the dozens frequented that business because it was where fresh chickens could be purchased. It too was a place where there was blood everywhere - on the floor behind the counter, on the aprons of those who killed and cut up the chicken into its various parts and even on the rubber boots of the men who worked there. That scene too has been indelibly seared into my memory that I wish I could forget. I can still remember the awful smell of that place.

Whether it was the butcher shop or the chicken shop, whatever my father bought it came home and my mother prepared it and our family joyfully devoured it. For some reason, what I
saw at the two shops was not remembered when I sat down to eat.

I wonder what it was like for those who were at Calvary and saw the Lamb of God slain? They too saw blood — a lot of blood. Before the Lamb was nailed alive to the cross there was blood. There was fresh blood on the back of Jesus as a result of His multiple scourging. There was blood trickling down His face from the crown of thorns that was driven into His scalp. Blood oozed from His body when He was smitten with a rod. Surely there must have been blood running down His back from His carrying His cross on His bare shoulders. When the nails were driven through His hands and His feet there again was more blood. We can only imagine how much blood came from His body when the spear was thrust into His side.

I wonder if anyone at that scene of Calvary could ever again eat lamb without thinking of what they had seen and heard and even smelled at Golgotha?

We come to a table of blood. I know that it is not referred to in this way in holy writ. It is the Lord’s Table or the Table of the Lord or the Lord’s Supper Table. But it is a table of blood. The loaf is His body that was cut, punctured, and pierced. It bled. The cup is His blood. Of that we have no doubt for Jesus said of the cup in Matthew 26:28, “...this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

What I saw in the butcher and the chicken shops as a young boy pales in significance to what we can see by our eye of faith regarding the slaughtering of our Lord. I heard one preacher say one time that when the events surrounding the crucifixion were finally finished that Jesus looked like a piece of raw, bloody, hamburger — the kind that I saw in the meat case many years ago. But what I saw in those meat shops was done to animals that were intended to be eaten by man; what those at Calvary saw was done to God’s only begotten Son, Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. He was publicly murdered for nothing that He did wrong. Even wicked Pilate had to admit, “...what evil has He done?”

The Word of God says that “...almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.” There had to be blood shed for men’s salvation. It wasn’t the shed blood of animals that did it for man. It was the shed blood of the holy Christ.

In contrast to the crucifixion, the table that sets before most congregations on any given Lord’s Day is rather neat and presentable. Some have a scarf or a doily. Some do not. Some have some kind of visual representation of a loaf or a bunch of grapes. Some do not. Some have many trays holding the bread and the cup. Some have only two — one for the loaf and one for the cup. But they all remind us of the blood. Leviticus 17:11 states not a law but a fact — “…the life of the flesh is in the blood.” Human flesh cannot live without blood. And men cannot live spiritually without blood. Blood is vital. But the blood that is absolutely essential for spiritual life is holy blood, sinless blood. And the only blood that meets that description is that came forth from the body of Jesus. He gave up His physical life when He shed His blood that made it possible to “whosoever will” to have eternal, everlasting life.
Those at Calvary said, "His blood be on us and our children." They knew not what they were saying or doing. But we, the church, know what we are saying and we know what we are doing when we worship Him at the table of blood having His blood not "on us" but "covering us." His body and His blood are on the table today as it is every Lord’s Day. Thank God for the “Table of Blood.”

PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, as Jesus did with His disciples in the upper room we too ask that you will bless the loaf which we are about to eat and that you will receive our thanks for the cup which we are about to drink. The bloody mess that Jesus became on our behalf is not pleasant for us to think about. We are ashamed of ourselves and our sins that required Jesus doing what He did on our behalf. But we praise you for His willingness to be our blood sacrifice. As you look on our inward man we pray that you see our heart filled with thanksgiving and adoration for what our Lord did for us who do not deserve one whit of your grace. We pray that you will accept our worship and our prayer in Jesus name. Amen.