Christmas is over. The festivities are finished. The packages have been unwrapped and their contents have been put away. The trees and the garland are down and in the closet, or basement, or attic, or garage. Our houses are back “in order” waiting for the next big event on the calendar.

For a few days people paid homage to Christ. His imaginary face was on the front of cards. Scriptures concerning Him were posted in various places and sometimes read. In various nativity scenes either on cards or standing in yards, His imaginary infant body was on display lying in a manger. But all of that has been neatly packed away waiting to be brought out once again next Christmas.

For a short time people gave our Lord a tip of the hat a few times. They looked and stared at Him while He lay in the manger as a babe. They even sung “Away In A Manger” and a few other old familiar carols that mentioned His name and His birth. But now it is time to move on with life. Valentine’s Day is right around the corner! People only have so much time to stop to look and stare at Him.

It is quite different for the church, however. Each Lord’s Day we come to the assembly of the saints to look and stare at Him – not as a babe in a manger, but as the Savior on the cross and as the Christ who resurrected from His tomb.

Throughout history people have looked and stared at Him. In the opening words of John’s gospel twice it is recorded that the forerunner of Christ, John the Baptist, exhorted his disciples to “Behold, the Lamb of God!” Look at Him. Stare at him. He is the One Who “takes away the sin of the world!”

I am reminded of a statement made in the prophetic twenty-second Psalm. Who can doubt that this Psalm is about the Lord Jesus Christ? Read it. Note the several prophetic statements regarding His crucifixion. Among them you will find this statement in verse 17: “They look and stare at Me.” This, people did at the cross. They looked and stared at Him as a blasphemous impostor, trumpeting Himself to be the Son of God, even God Himself! You are familiar with the whole account.

“...they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him....they...twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head and a reed in His right hand....they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’...they
spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head....they...mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified....they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink....Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots...."

They looked and stared at Him with hatred, with disdain, with loathing. There had been no room for Him in the inn when He was born and there was no room for Him in their hearts after He was finally put to death.

There is no better place to look and stare at Him than at His table, the Lord’s Table. But how can you look and stare at Him at His table? Look at the table that is before you! It is just an ordinary table with some unleavened bread and fruit of the vine resting upon it. That is the only visible reminder we have of Him when it comes to sharing His supper with Him and His followers.

Why do we do this every Lord’s Day? What is it that draws us to this table to look and stare?

Of course, part of what draws us is our knowledge of God’s Word and our desire to be obedient to it. But is it not also the converting work that He did upon our hearts that were as dark and damning as the hearts that were at His cross almost two thousand years ago, and looked and stared? By His grace, somehow our hearts were receptive to His message. For some reason His message, His gospel, penetrated our hearts while we looked and stared at His cross while over many years the hearts of others have been impenetrable. What a debt we owe Him. Yet all we can do is to render obedience by coming to a table that cost us nothing but cost Him everything. Who is there among us who can look and stare at His table and believe He or she has earned or deserves a place at this table? Who can look and stare at the loaf which is His body and at the cup which is His blood and think that our salvation is a minor or trifling matter? Who can do this?

And so we, like those of Psalm 22:17, “look and stare at [Him],” but not dishonorably with disdain or disgust but with adoration, praise, worship, and thanksgiving. We come as miserable, spiritual failures but still we come and look and stare. We come as adopted sons and daughters to the Table of our Lord and look and stare at Him Who is seated at the head of the Table as the head of His church. May God give us the grace that is needed to examine ourselves — not others; to confess and to repent of our sins — not judge others; to devote ourselves to His service — not expect to be served by others. As we pray, you may want to continue to “look and stare.”