

GOD GIVES US EVERYTHING WE NEED FOR THIS BODY AND LIFE

Hear again the Word of God for this seventh Sunday after the Feast of the Holy Trinity, as Jesus says:

I have compassion upon the crowd, because here, (for) three days, they have remained with Me, and they have nothing to eat; and if I release them hungry into their houses, they may be weary on the way; and some of them are from afar.¹

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

This day marks the last of the Sundays of Johntide this year. Its emphases on stewardship, the right division of Law and Gospel, and the Ministry of the Church fulfilled by Christians in their various vocations will give way next Saturday as we enter Laurencetide. That sub-season will bring into our ears and hearts texts that emphasize Holy Absolution and Sanctification. (The latter has certainly been led into by our Sunday morning Adult Bible Studies for the past few weeks)!

That having been remembered, this last Sunday of Johntide brings to our hearts teaching concerning God's answer to His people's needs. We are called to learn that God gives us everything we *need* for this body and life. He gives us the gift of prayer by which we may approach Him in faith that He will hear and answer our petitions, requests, and intercessions.

Even so, we Christians do, at times, forget how powerful prayer is when it is offered in our vocations. We are aided in such forgetting by the culture around us. How often it is we hear, in times of local and national tragedies, that some politician (as one from El Paso was recorded saying just yesterday) will say that he or she is keeping the victims in his or her thoughts? Other than reinforce the concept that such an individual's

¹ Mark 8:2-3.

thoughts could mean that that one wants to show empathy for the families or the victims, what eternal good can that type of response really do apart from prayer to the One, True God?

After all, God has revealed repeatedly through His Word that it is His will to answer the prayers of His people in Christ. Think about the reality that many of us pray words like these on a regular basis: *Deliver us from evil...* That petition is given to remind us that it is God's will to restrain the evil one in this fallen world. (One only need to read in texts that reveal God's wrath at unrepentant sinners (in both Old and New Testament eras) to re-discover what terror there could be did God not restrain evil). The truth that God wills to hold back evil, even before He hears His people's prayers, can certainly bring comfort to us Christians as we exercise our daily vocation of offering the sacrifice of prayer.

In today's readings, we hear God's responses to another petition from the same prayer that most of us pray, likely a few times a day. That is, *Give us this day our daily bread....* Those who looked up this day's Catechism lesson posted on our website, and you who reinforce in your regular devotion time that which the *Small Catechism* teaches about our daily bread, know that petition asks, and recognizes, that God provides *everything* we *need* to support our bodies and lives on this earth.

For the few who have dug back into the *Large Catechism* after our Vocation Bible School in preparation for today's service, you would have read, concerning the daily bread petition of the "Our Father" that the words we Christians say so regularly are chiefly spoken against the devil and all the forces of evil that fell with him to this world. The Deceiver would have us worry, really generally consume ourselves with thoughts

about how we might, ourselves, meet our own daily needs. He has a willing accomplice in our Old Natures.

Against that, we Christians can remember that God has actually provided enough in this fallen creation to meet every person's bodily *needs*. Study after study, in decade after decade, have shown that to be true. It is the devil who works on the large scale to tempt people to war, strife, and cause pollution. This he, and the 1/3 of the angels who fell from heaven to earth in his rebellion as they were cast from heaven, work — through lies, deceit and encouragement of humans to satisfy their own greedy desires.

In other words, the forces of evil appeal to people's sinful natures. The fallen world, people's own sinful lusts, and the devil and his hordes work together, as an unholy trinity to bring all kinds of evil that serves to prevent all people from receiving all that they need for their bodies and lives. Thank God Christ, in His death and resurrection, continues to restrain the evil in this fallen creation.

It is the might and power of God, in providing for the daily needs of all people, including unregenerate sinners (bad people without Christ), that Jesus showed when He multiplied bread and fish for a second recorded time. The first time the New Testament records him doing this is through the eye-witness report of Jesus multiplying bread and relish fish for 5,000 men plus women and children. That time, God supplied in abundance, (and did so without any record of 25,000 or so people's prayers for such). You will recall the disciples filled 12 baskets of leftovers after everyone had eaten his or her fill. (That might remind some of us of the quantities of food put out, consumed and left over after each night of Vacation Bible School).

Today, you have heard of Jesus multiplying seven loaves and a few small fish for a crowd of some 16,000 people. Now, that is an assumed number, drawn from that which we know were present: 4,000 men plus women and children (as a parallel text records for us)². When they were done eating, there were gathered seven baskets of leftovers.³

Some theologians over the years have tried to teach the feeding of the 4,000 and the feeding of the 5,000 were one event that had been corrupted by memory in the minds of the Gospel writer. However, Jesus Himself is recorded as saying a bit later in Mark's Gospel that both events happened separately.⁴ So, who are you going to believe... Jesus or some teachers who followed Him centuries later?

Jesus, in that later text, provides to His disciples, including you, His reason for feeding about 40,000 people on two separate occasions.⁵ That is, He teaches that He provided for so many people's daily needs because He cares about His people. This remains especially true for those, like you, who are following Him to hear His Word. To sum up today's main teaching point: because you follow Jesus through His Word, you know that He gives you your daily bread. That produces a response in you, that is the giving of thanks.

Today's texts are reminding you that when you have your fill of daily good things, you are free to remember God and His pure Word. You are being called to not follow after those who would, through their corruption of God's Word, give you another Jesus, another Savior, a God other than the God Who reveals Himself through the Scriptures.

² *Matthew* 15:38.

³ *Mark* 8:8; *Matthew* 15:32-39.

⁴ *Mark* 8:19-20.

⁵ Cf. *Mark* 8:14-21.

On the other hand, the records of the miracles of the two events on Jesus' multiplication of loaves and fish are not calling you to follow Jesus just to get your daily needs met. That could lead your mind to think of Him as a kind of "Bread God." Such thinking can lead you into a false concept of Jesus.

That would be to think of Jesus as a "You scratch my back and I'll scratch your back," kind of god. That is where a lot of pop-Christian worship leads. Whether it is intended or not, any worship directed first from humans to God, rather than from God to humans, will lead people into thinking, whether they would name such or not, that their words, songs, and actions are moving God to do something(s) for them or others.

If that were the true direction of approaching God – "Look what I am doing for You, so do good for me," one would be exercising control over God. In the end, that would make the offeror ruler over Jesus.

Yet, Scripture repeatedly reveals that He is not a god who you need to please so that He gives you good things. Rather, it makes it clear that He is the God Who provides all you *need* for this body and life because He loves you. Why, He even sacrificed Himself to God to pay the price your sins demand. Jesus still says:

I have compassion upon the crowd, because here, (for) three days, they have remained with Me, and they have nothing to eat; and if I release them hungry into their houses, they may be weary on the way; and some of them are from afar.⁶

From that and the other record of Jesus' miraculous feeding of multitudes, do you recall any record of anyone in the crowd asking Jesus for food? (There were likely preteens and teenagers in those crowds. Have you ever heard one of them go more than a few hours without saying, "I'm

⁶ Mark 8:2-3.

hungry!”) It was Jesus in the feeding of 4,000 of His disciples, who remarked that the people, who had been following Jesus for days, were likely to be hungry.

You have heard it repeated that Jesus said that He was *moved with compassion* for the multitudes. That feeling of mercy shows the nature of God, and that Jesus is true God. He, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, actually has it in His essence and nature to care for His creatures.

That was declared today’s record from Genesis. There you heard, that apart from any request, work, thought or deed of Adam, God gave him all the trees of Paradise from which to eat – except one. That reveals that it is God’s will to care for all the descendants of Adam, and most especially for you His disciples in this generation.

This He does by providing rain, sun, day and night, the seasons of the year, farmers, transportation workers, the retailers, and through all kinds of people in all sorts of vocations, to provide you with that which you need to support your body and life in the time you actually *need* it. As indicated earlier, the reality that, at times, you might not get all you need is not God’s fault. It is the result of sin in this fallen creation.

The fact you do not receive all you *want or desire* is not God’s fault. That is a result of your fallen nature and the demands of your flesh that comes from our inborn inclination to sin, which reveals itself through our strong or lustful desires (otherwise known as concupiscence as we prayed to be protected from last Sunday).

From such sin, the Word calls you to repent! Will to turn and believe that Jesus has given you all that you *need*. He began to do that long before you were born, as He paid the penalty that your selfish sinful desires deserve. Remember that, ultimately, Jesus took all your sins and evil

desires upon His pure and sinless flesh. He bore them onto the cross, into death and the grave, so that you can be free from them.

Today, you heard St. Paul declare that which you have been given in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit speaks to you who will hear through these words:

But now, all of you have been freed from the sins and (have become) slaves to God; all of you have fruit unto holiness, and (its) end – life eternal.⁷

That is truly good news! In the death of Jesus, you have been liberated from bondage to sin. That is proclaimed to encourage you to give thanks, to receive all good things as gifts of God.

Further, you are to know that any true bad is not from Him, but comes from your own sinful nature, the devil, and this fallen creation. They are defeated enemies. In Christ's death, You are freed to confess your sins and to walk in holiness of life.

Hold fast to those truths as you hear of acts of terror in our land; of infants are being murdered in wombs as sacrifices to the gods of individual desires; of society's affirming as normal human-to-human relationships that are contrary to Natural Law.

Remember, the Word of God still stands in our society, even where the individual has become a god unto himself or herself. As I read recently, we have moved from the "me" generation, to having the, "me, me, me," generation come of age. On account of that, we need to hear of the realities that Jesus came to bring. His Word declares that, even in a world full of sin He, God, is still concerned for the everyday needs of His followers. What a

⁷ Romans 6:22.

God He is that He continues to give Himself to you! That was foreshadowed in this record from St. Mark's Gospel:

And, taking the seven loaves, giving thanks, He broke (them) and gave (them) to His disciples that they may distribute (them); and they distributed (them) to the crowd. And they had little fish; and blessing them, He said also that these they may distribute.⁸

When you heard that text read, did you think of that which you see and hear in this place every Sunday, Wednesday and High Feast Day?

The pattern of Jesus having given thanks and then distributing His gifts through His called servants foreshadows the Sacrament of the Altar and the Distribution. This the Church has believed for some time. In some of the earliest artwork depicting the institution of Lord's Supper fish are depicted in addition to bread and wine on the Table.

Jesus, before He established His Last Supper, and with it the ongoing Sacrament of the Altar, declared that which He wanted His disciples to remember from the multiplications of loaves and fish. ⁹ God wanted them, as He wants you, to remember that He cares for your bodily needs. From His good and gracious provision, He does grant you all you *need* for this body and life.

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Trinity VII (*LSB* One-year series)

Introit Psalm 47:1, 3; Psalm 33:1-11 Genesis 2:7-17; Romans 6:19-23; Mark 8:1-9

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Soli Deo Gloria

⁸ *Mark* 8:6b – 7.

⁹ Cf. *Mark* 8:20.

NOTES:

And they ate and were satisfied. Then there were seven mat baskets left over.

Then He commanded the crowd to recline upon the earth. And taking the seven loaves, giving thanks, He broke and gave to His disciples in order that they might continue to distribute to the crowd. Also, they had small fish; then blessing them, He said to set them also before the reclined men.

I continue to have deep compassion for the crowd, because they continue with Me here three days, but they do not have anything that they might eat.

Collect Prayer:

We beseech You, graciously abide among us with Your blessing, and keep us from covetousness and the cares of this life, that we may seek first Your kingdom and Your righteousness, and in all things needful for body and soul, experience Your ever-present help...

God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.