

The Seventh Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Mark 8:1-9
August 4th, 2019
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

They Have Now Continued with Me

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Lord God, heavenly Father, Who in the wilderness didst by Thy Son abundantly feed four thousand men besides women and children with seven loaves and a few small fishes: We beseech Thee, graciously abide among us with Thy blessing, and keep us from covetousness and the cares of this life, that we may seek first Thy kingdom and Thy righteousness, and in all things needful for body and soul, experience Thine ever-present help; through Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one true God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our Lord + Jesus tells His Apostles that the crowds that followed Him had continued with Him for three days. They continued with Him because they wanted to hear His preaching. They wanted to hear the Word of God from Him. Just as we heard a few weeks ago when the Lord's preaching was given a physical example of its efficacy with the large draught of fish, today our we see just how enduring our Lord's preaching is by the example of this large crowd of people who followed Him, listening to His preaching and desiring to hear the Word of God from His lips for three days. When St. Peter received the great catch of fish, the Lord had preached to a large crowd then, too. The crowd was so great that He had to get into a fishing boat and put out from the shore. Here the crowds were willing to go with our Lord + Jesus anywhere and for any length of time, just to hear Him preach.

The Evangelist St. Mark tells us that our Lord brought the crowds out into the wilderness. When we hear about the wilderness we are reminded of several events in the Scriptures. The Israelites journeyed in the wilderness for forty years after they were rescued from slavery in Egypt. Our Lord + Jesus in order to escape the destruction of King Herod fled into Egypt and passed through this same wilderness. He returned from Egypt and resided in Nazareth after coming through this same wilderness again. After His Baptism in the Jordan River by St. John the Baptist, the Holy Ghost led our Lord + Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil after forty days of fasting. Even some of the prophets were driven into the wilderness because of their preaching. The Prophet Elijah had to flee to the wilderness to escape the wrath of Jezebel and her prophets of Baal. There he was fed with only bread while the false prophets of Baal feasted sumptuously at Jezebel's table.

The Lord + Jesus brings the crowds into the wilderness to remind them that they should live only upon the Word of God. The Lord will provide for all of their earthly needs, when they are content to hear and receive His holy Word.

We also are in a wilderness. This world is a wilderness. Sure, we may have an abundance of food and beverages, lush landscapes ripe with food, but this world is a spiritual wilderness. The world has no need for the Word of God. This world has no need for the preaching of the Lord + Jesus. This world has even less of a need for those who do attend preaching and cling to the Word of God. Therefore, the Lord + Jesus bringing the crowds into the wilderness is a reminder to us as well, that the best place to hear the Word of God—to receive the benefits of His preaching of the Gospel—is in the wilderness of the world. There is nothing in the world worth our time or effort. This wilderness of the world drives us into this holy sanctuary to hear the Word of God; to hear the preaching of the Gospel.

The crowds in today's Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Mark were so content to hear the Gospel from the Lord + Jesus that they did not worry about any of their physical needs. They had continued with Him for three days. They had fasted for three days, as Luther and others translate this text to read, that after three days of fasting and listening to the preaching of the Christ, our Lord could not send them away empty handed lest they faint along the way, on account of their fasting for three days. They had lived for three days on the bread of the Word of God. Now, our Lord's compassion for them shines through.

They were content to hear His preaching, and receive only the bread of the Word of God, but now the Lord + Jesus would have compassion on them and give them physical bread.

This is the same way it is for us. When we learn to live our lives content to forsake the earthly things of this life, and cling to and yearn for the faithful preaching of the Word of God, we learn to be content with whatever earthly things our Lord + Jesus chooses to give to us. For when we cling to the pure preaching of the Word of God and the promises proclaimed through that Word, we know that we have all that we need to support us in this body of sin. We have forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation, and through our faith in this promise, we know that these things can never be taken from us even if we suffer death.

All of our earthly possessions will either be destroyed or given to someone else when we die. Therefore, we should never place our trust in them, or seek to build up our earthly possessions. We are only stewards of these things. Our Lord God has given them to us in order to praise His Name and serve our neighbor. Our earthly gifts are not really for our use, we are to use them to better our fellowman. Certainly, we can use what we need to support this body and life; we do not need to starve ourselves or go thirsty in order to serve our neighbor. But we should always remember that our earthly gifts are given to us so that as faithful stewards of these gifts we may help and assist our neighbors.

This is why the real treasures in this life are the spiritual gifts that the Holy Ghost gifts to us in this wilderness world. We receive forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation through all the means that the Holy Ghost uses to create and sustain faith in us: through our Holy Baptism which we live in every day. It is not just some historical event in our lives, but a daily washing and renewal of the Holy Ghost as we daily drown the Old Adam and are raised as new creations before our Lord God. This is why we confess daily the Apostles' Creed for it is the creed of our Holy Baptisms—the creed that we confessed at our Holy Baptism and again when we were confirmed in the faith. This is also why we daily pray the Lord's Prayer, for in the prayer we daily confess our sins when we pray, "forgive us our trespasses, as we confess those who trespass against us."

The Holy Ghost sustains our faith also through the preaching of the Gospel which we hear when we gather together, and whenever two or three gather together, to hear the pure preaching of the Gospel here in this place. In the midst of the wilderness of the world, the Lord + Jesus preaches into our ears through the voice of His called and ordained minister of the Word. The minister of the Word gives us spiritual bread to eat from this pulpit. Our souls are fed through His calling us to remember that our sins have been forgiven on account of Christ's works and merits, so that we now have eternal

life in Heaven with all the saints and angels, and we will get to live forever with our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ.

The Holy Ghost also feeds our souls with spiritual bread when we confess our sins. When we confess that we are poor, miserable sinners—that we have no good thing living in us, that we are trapped in this body of sin and live in this miserable wilderness of the world—the called and ordained minister of the Word absolves our sins; he proclaims that our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. Our Lord + Jesus fulfilled the Law and paid the penalty of our sins, and it through these works that we have salvation. In faith we cling to this promise proclaimed by the minister of the Word and believe that our sins indeed have been forgiven, and we are thereby justified, that is, made right with God through faith.

Our Lord + Jesus gifted the crowds who continued with Him for three days listening to His preaching with bread and fish. In the wilderness for forty years the Israelites received bread from Heaven called manna. The Prophet Elijah received bread from the Lord God when an angel of the Lord appeared to him and gave him bread and water. We receive bread and wine in the Holy Supper of our Lord which is our Lord's Body and Blood. In the wilderness the crowds received physical bread, and were strengthened for their journey out of the wilderness. In this wilderness world we receive our Lord's Body and Blood in bread and wine and our strengthened in this wilderness world to believe on and trust in our Lord + Jesus Christ for all of our needs.

Through these means the Holy Ghost works to create and sustain faith in us. The faith that He creates clings to our Lord's promises. We learn to be content with our earthly gifts and use them to support and help our neighbor. And we learn, like the crowds in today's Gospel, to follow our Lord + Jesus wherever He would lead us. The crowds were led into the wilderness and happily continued with our Lord for three days. Let us also follow our Lord + Jesus in this wilderness of the world, and come often to this place of worship to hear His preaching through the mouth of His servant, and cling to the spiritual gifts that He in His compassion desires to give to us. He feeds our souls with the heavenly manna of His Word, and strengthens our faith, so that we may not faint when we go out into this wilderness of the world. May the Lord continue with us throughout our lives drawing us unto Himself through His preaching. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, Whose mercies are new unto us every morning, and Who, though we have in no wise deserved Thy goodness, dost abundantly provide for all our wants of body and soul: give us, we pray Thee, Thy Holy Spirit, that we may heartily acknowledge Thy merciful goodness toward us, give thanks for all Thy benefits, and serve Thee in willing obedience; through Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!