

Laetare
St. John 6:1-15
March 14th, 2021
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Now the Passover Was Near

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 by Thy Son didst feed five thousand men in the desert with five loaves and two fishes: We beseech Thee to abide graciously also with us in the fullness of Thy blessing. Preserve us from avarice and the cares of this life, that we may seek first Thy Kingdom and Thy righteousness, and in all things perceive Thy fatherly goodness, through 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.

On Invocavit Sunday we heard of our Lord's temptation by the devil in the wilderness. The first temptation that was placed upon our Lord after He had fasted for forty days and forty nights, and was hungry, was to make stones into bread. Our Lord + Jesus refuted the temptation of the devil by using the Word of God. His response was that "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God" from the eighth chapter of the Fifth Book of Moses, commonly called Deuteronomy. Our Lord + Jesus did not need to prove He was the Son of God by making bread; by sating His hunger. He proved He was the Son of God by doing the works that the Son of God is supposed to do when He comes into the world.

In today's reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John, our Lord + Jesus is followed by large crowds that believed on Him because of these works. They saw the signs which He did upon those who had various diseases. He had cured the lepers; given sight to the blind; unstopped the ears of the deaf and loosed their tongues to proclaim and rejoice in His Name. He had cast out demons; raised the dead; healed the ones with paralysis and broken limbs. The crowds had seen the signs and had believed on Him. They therefore followed Him to hear His preaching. He spoke as one having authority and not as the scribes and Pharisees. They learned from Him to cling to every Word that proceeded from the mouth of God—the mouth of the Lord + Jesus.

They loved His preaching so much that this large crowd found themselves in the wilderness with the Lord + Jesus and His Apostles. Where were they going to get food for this large crowd? Our Lord put the question to St. Philip in order to test him—in order to show him in Whom he should trust—for our Lord already knew what He was about to do. Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough to feed this large crowd numbering about 5,000 men, plus women and children. They would not be able to receive even a little; receive a few crumbs from the Lord's table. There was a boy there that had five barley loaves and two small fish, but that definitely would not feed this large crowd if two hundred denarii worth of bread was insufficient.

These 5,000 men, plus women and children had followed our Lord to hear His preaching; to receive from Him the bread of the Word of God. Now they would receive bread in abundance, and also fish, as much as they desired. They all ate and were filled, and twelve baskets were filled with the remnants that remained. None of what our Lord + Jesus provided would go to waste. This miraculous feeding of the 5,000 is not just a miracle that provided food for the large crowds, but it is also a picture of how the Lord + Jesus desires to be with His Word and His Sacraments.

The abundance of our manifold sins is met by the Lord + Jesus with an abundance of His gifts that give us forgiveness of sins. He does not just desire to feed our bellies, but feed our souls with Himself. He gives seed to the sower and bread to the eater for all of our daily needs. But He also gives us the Bread of Heaven. He is the Bread of Life come down from Heaven. Through the means of grace, He gives to us Himself. He preaches into our ears through the Gospel that He has fulfilled the Law of God for us, and took our punishment upon Himself on the tree of the holy cross. In Holy Baptism He washes us clean of all of our iniquities, and gives us His Holy Ghost to strengthen and guard our faith whenever we remember that our sins have been washed away by the Blood which He shed on the tree of the holy cross. He even gives us to eat and drink of His Body and Blood which He offered and shed on the tree of the holy cross for the forgiveness of our sins. We eat bread and drink wine and receive the remission of all of our sins on account of His sacrifice for us.

He gives us all of these gifts in abundance so that when we sin, and come to the realization of how much we sin, we can find comfort in Him and His works. Through these means the Holy Ghost proves our faith, as He did St. Philip, by showing us that life and salvation are found only in the Lord + Jesus and His works and merits. Through these means He teaches us to trust and believe in every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God. For our Lord speaks to us that He has won salvation for us by His death on the tree of the holy cross.

It is not insignificant that the Apostle and Evangelist St. John mentions the time frame of these events. He says that the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. Now this is not the Passover where our Lord offered up His life as a ransom for our sins and the sins of the whole world. Most commentators are in agreement that this is our Lord's second Passover since beginning His ministry. Meaning that this is a year away from the events that we will soon be placing our focus upon; the events of Holy Week. But that the Passover was near would have placed into the hearts and minds of the crowd the events of the first Passover; when the Lord God by the hand of Moses led the people of Israel out of the bondage of slavery to the Egyptians. Just as it is for us when Good Friday and the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord are near our thoughts turn to the suffering that our Lord + Jesus underwent out of love for us in order to redeem us from sin, death and the power of the devil.

Furthermore, that the Passover was near and the remembrance of the Exodus of the Israelites would have been on their minds, this feeding of 5,000 men, plus women and children, on this mountain in the wilderness would have brought to mind how the Lord God fed the Israelites in the wilderness with bread from Heaven for forty years. The people of Israel had been fed by the Lord God with manna—bread from Heaven—for forty years. Here in this wilderness, on this mountain, the Lord God once again feeds the people of Israel with bread from Heaven. They received bread from the Bread of Life Himself. They received food for their bellies and for their souls from the Lord God Himself.

It is no wonder that they want to immediately take Him by force and make Him their king. Moses had been the prophet of the Lord God and through him, the Lord God did many signs and wonders for His people in the wilderness. Through Moses the Lord God had promised that He would send to them a Prophet just like Moses to be their deliverer. Joshua took the place of Moses after his death, but he was not the Prophet promised by the Lord God. The Lord God had given them a king, Saul, but he clearly was not the Prophet promised by the Lord God, even though he did prophesy. He slowly became more and more corrupt the longer he was king. Even King David, a man after the Lord God's own heart

and the greatest king the kingdom of Israel had, was not that Prophet.

Through King David the Lord God promised that the Prophet would be born in his lineage, and would establish his throne forever. Clearly these thoughts are on the minds of the crowds following our Lord + Jesus in the wilderness when they see the miraculous feeding of such a large crowd. It is no wonder they desire to take Him by force and make Him king. They wanted that prophesy to be fulfilled. They wanted that prophesy to be fulfilled right then and there. But our Lord's Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom it is an eternal heavenly Kingdom, one into which we have been placed as citizens. It is our heritage and our promise. We will live in this eternal Kingdom forever in Heaven.

But the crowds misunderstanding the holy Scriptures, wanted an earthly kingdom to be established then and there. Our Lord + Jesus on Invocavit had also been tempted by the devil with all the kingdoms of the world, if He would bow down and worship Satan. Here is another temptation placed upon our Lord + Jesus, to establish an earthly kingdom with Him being ruler and king. Once again, our Lord + Jesus wants no part of this temptation, so He departs to be by Himself, so that He can worship and pray to the Only One Who should be worshiped and prayed to; to His heavenly Father.

The Lord + Jesus establishes this eternal Kingdom by His death on the cross. It is from the throne of the cross where our Lord takes His place and establishes His Kingdom; a Kingdom that gives us abundantly all His good gifts: forgiveness for our sins, eternal life with Him in Heaven, and salvation and rescue from the bondage of slavery to the death and the devil. We are placed into this Kingdom—we become citizens of Heaven—by our participation in the means of grace. When we cling to every Word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord God, and when we receive from Him the Bread of Life. We are fed in this wilderness of the world so that we may cling to our Lord + Jesus and look to Him for every good thing.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us rejoice this day that our Lord + Jesus has won for us salvation by His death on the cross, and has given to us life and salvation in Him. Let us never stop worshiping our true Lord and Savior Who sits upon the throne of grace—His mercy seat—and gives us to eat of the Bread of Life; His Body and Blood given and shed for us in bread and wine. Come let us receive this meal with thanksgiving as we remember and proclaim our Lord's death for our salvation. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Lord God, heavenly Father, Who through Thy Son in the desert with little didst abundantly feed thousands, we beseech Thee, visit us also with Thy blessing, and preserve us from covetousness and cares of the body, that we may seek first Thy Kingdom and righteousness, and experience Thy fatherly goodness in all things needful for soul and body; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, 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!