

The Seventh Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Mark 8:1-9
July 31st, 2022
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

The Multitude Being Very Great

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Prayer in Pulpit before 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 Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

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

In the Church's year we hear from the Evangelists both the feeding of the five thousand and the feeding of the four thousand. In the Gospel of the Apostle and Evangelist St. John, during the Lenten season, we hear about our Lord satisfying the hunger of five thousand men, plus women and children. Here in the Trinity season—today—we hear from the Evangelist St. Mark about how our Lord fed four thousand men, plus women and children. We are told by the Evangelist St. Mark that there were large crowds that followed our Lord + Jesus. The multitude was very great. Many people had come to the Lord + Jesus to hear Him preach. They followed Him for three days, listening to His preaching. St. Mark records that our Lord said many had come from afar.

The very great multitude had traveled three days from places far away all to hear the preaching of the Lord + Jesus. His preaching demands such an audience, for His preaching is the truth. His preaching is the way to Heaven. His preaching is the truth about how one is to be saved from one's enemies of the devil, the world, and one's sinful flesh. His preaching is the only preaching that leads all who hear, and believe, into an eternal life in Heaven with the Lord + Jesus, and with all the saints and angels who dwell therein. This is how important the preaching of the Lord + Jesus is. His preaching creates faith. It causes us to believe on Him as the One and Only Savior of the whole world. It causes us to believe that He is indeed our One and Only Savior. His preaching is a preaching of repentance toward the forgiveness of sins.

This is, after all, the purpose of preaching. It is to preach the Law of God so that us poor, miserable sinners see our lost and fallen state, and learn not to trust in our own works and merits, but despair of our works, and regret our sin and sinfulness, so that we yearn to be free from sin. The kind of freedom from sin the St. Paul talks about in his Epistle to the Church at Rome, which a part of is our Epistle reading for today. We are no longer slaves to sin. This is what repentance and faith create through the Word of God. This is what the preaching of the Law produces. It causes us to look outside of ourselves for our salvation, because there is nothing in us but sin and rebellion.

This is why the Lord's preaching—true and pure preaching—does not just preach the Law; does not just preach that one cannot be saved by one's works, but also preaches the Gospel. The Gospel gives a person—a poor, miserable sinner—nothing to cling onto but the Lord + Jesus. Any preaching of the Gospel that adds something to the works and merits of the Christ, is not a pure preaching of the Gospel. Salvation is to be found in the perfect obedience of the Law by the Lord + Jesus, not by us. Salvation is found in the perfect and innocent suffering and death of the Lord + Jesus on the tree of the holy cross on our behalf, and not in any punishment we may endure or give to ourselves, or requirement we may place upon ourselves. Salvation is found in the Lord + Jesus alone.

This is the true and pure preaching that causes a very great multitude to follow the Lord + Jesus into the wilderness. They came from afar, and followed Him till they were hungry and weak, because the Word of the Lord held life and salvation. They learned the simple truth that we learn every First Sunday in Lent, that man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord God. This Man + Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God. He was the Lord God. He was the Lord God born of our flesh, and dwelling among us. His Word was the Word of the Lord God. Who would not follow this Man to hear His preaching, even if they did not fully understand that He was the Lord God incarnate? His Word revealed Who He was. His preaching led people to believe that this Man + Jesus had the words of eternal life.

My dear friends, would we not also want to hear this preaching? Would we also not follow our Lord + Jesus for three days no matter the distance? Would we not want to hear as much as we could that salvation is not found in us, but in the Christ, the Son of the Lord God? The Holy Ghost works faith through the Word of God, to cause us to cling to the Lord and His preaching. On account of the faith dwelling in us, we would do whatever we could to be a part of that very large multitude gathering around the Lord + Jesus to hear His Word.

The good news is that we do not have to go very far. We do not have to travel for three days to hear the pure preaching of the Lord + Jesus. We need only come to this holy house and hear and receive the pure preaching of the Gospel from this pulpit by the minister of the Lord + Jesus. That which the very great multitude traveled far and long to hear, we have right here in our midst. We have the words of eternal life preached into our ears in this very place. We do not have to travel very far. In fact, if we are far away, the true ministers of the Word of the Lord God will travel long and far to bring to us the pure preaching of the Word of the Lord God. For, like their Master, the Lord + Jesus, they have compassion upon the crowds. The true ministers of the Lord + Jesus have compassion for poor, miserable sinners, because they are such a poor, miserable sinner, and know where the only source of salvation is to be found. They provide for us by giving to us the Lord + Jesus as the only means of our salvation.

The very great multitude of four thousand men, plus women and children who followed the Lord + Jesus long and far to hear His Word, received even more gifts from the Lord there in the wilderness. They received a meal. The meal was fish and bread. They had enough to satisfy their hunger. There was no rationing of fish and bread, but they ate to their full. There was so much food for them to eat that there were seven baskets of leftovers rounded up after everybody ate to their full. This shows us how abundant the Lord God is with His gifts. It shows us how much our Lord God loves us. He does this for everyone, even the wicked and those who hate Him. Those who revile Him, but still receive His merciful gifts, will eventually learn what it means to be without the Lord's mercy. When the Lord God removes His merciful hand; when He stops protecting those who hate Him and refuse to believe on Him from the attacks of the devil, they will discover truly what Hell is like. Hell is the place where the Lord God does not dwell at all.

Here in the Church; here in this place where we gather around the Word and Sacraments to receive the merciful gifts of the Lord God, we are given both the pure preaching of the Lord God, and

we, like the very great multitude, receive a meal. This meal differs greatly from the meal that the multitude in the wilderness received. They received bread and fish which satisfied their physical bodies for the journey home. We receive the true Body and Blood of our Lord + Jesus given to us in bread and wine for the satisfaction of our spiritual bodies to sustain us for our journey to our eternal home in Heaven. We eat this bread and drink this cup, and receive the forgiveness of all our sins. This meal is the perfect meal for poor, miserable sinners like us. For we receive in bread and wine the mercy of the Lord + Jesus. We receive His Body and Blood which He offered for us on the tree of the holy cross.

Like His gifts of Word and food to the very great multitude which were given in abundance on account of His compassion for the crowds who were like sheep without a shepherd, we also receive an abundance of faith, life and salvation from this holy meal which we share together in fellowship with one another, and with our Lord + Jesus.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us rejoice always that we do not have to travel far and long to receive these abundant gifts of mercy from our Lord + Jesus. We need only come to this holy house and gather with each other in true fellowship to receive the gifts of the Lord + Jesus, which He freely and abundantly gives to us out of His compassion for us. For He knows that we were once slaves to sin, but now we have been set free to be slaves to the Lord God. We are freed from the bonds of death and destruction. We are now bound to the gifts of forgiveness and eternal life. Through our Holy Baptism, and our continuous participation in this meal of our Lord + Jesus, we have been bound to our Lord + Jesus forever through the continuous gift of faith bestowed upon us by the Holy Ghost through these means of grace. Our Lord provides for us constantly the means to be free from sin, and remain in His Kingdom forever.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us continue to rejoice in these gifts and receive them willingly as often as we can. Like the crowds who were only concerned about hearing the preaching of the Lord + Jesus, let us remember that our Lord + Jesus desires us to hear His preaching too. Let us also continue to have faith, for this is what the Word of the Lord produces in us, it produces a faith that clings at all times to the merciful gifts of the Lord + Jesus. He abundantly gives us these gifts here in this place, in which we gather together as the Body of Christ to share with one another our burdens and joys. May the Lord God Almighty keep us steadfast in this faith until He calls us all to our eternal home in Heaven. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same 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!