

Laetare
St. John 6:1-15
March 19th, 2023
St. Bartholomew Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Fort Myers, FL
All Saints Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Pawleys Island, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Whence Are We to Buy Bread?

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

Jesus therefore lifting up His eyes, and seeing that a great multitude cometh unto Him, saith unto Philip, “Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat?” And this He said to prove him: for He Himself knew what He would do.

Prayer in Pulpit before 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.

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

This Gospel stands in stark contrast to the rest of the Gospel readings from the season of Lent. In all the other readings, our Lord + Jesus is battling the devil and his demons. Here is battles no demon; He is not tempted by Satan. He is instead confronted by the hunger of the multitudes who followed Him on account of the signs that He did. Seeing the multitudes, feeling their hunger, the Lord + Jesus asks St. Philip from whence they could buy bread to feed all these people. This He does to prove him; to teach him something of great importance that he will not forget after the miracle had been performed. This is also why this Gospel reading on the feeding of the five thousand men, plus women and children, is given to us during Lent. It is to teach us something that we will not forget.

Our Lord proves us, too. He is teaching us truths that we will not forget if we pay attention. The writer of this Gospel, the Apostle and Evangelist St. John, makes a point of showing us the timeline of when these events occur. He says that the Passover, the Feast of the Jews was close at hand. This is done to connect us to events of the Old Testament; to bring us back to the first Passover of our Lord God, when He destroyed the enemies of the Israelites—the Egyptians—by killing their firstborn sons, and passing over the houses of the children of Israel who had marked their lintels and doorframes with the blood of a sacrificed lamb. This sacrifice of the Passover lamb is the connection that St. John makes in this Gospel reading.

Our Lord + Jesus is the true Passover Lamb. He is the One Who is sacrificed on the altar of the tree of the holy cross to rescue us from our enemies of sin, death, and the power of the devil. Our Lord’s blood is shed on the cross for the atonement of the whole world, so that all those who believe on Him

might have eternal life. By His death He destroys death; He defeats Satan—prefigured by the Pharaoh of Egypt—once and for all. He is both the Priest and the Lamb. He is the One Who kills the Firstborn Son of God, and He is also the Firstborn Son killed to destroy sin and death. He offers up His own Body and Blood on the tree of the holy cross to win salvation for all mankind; He offers up His Body and Blood for the remission of all our sins. Forgiveness is offered through His Body and Blood to all those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, and who humbly confess their sins to Him, trusting in His grace that their sins will be forgiven.

The Body and Blood that He offered on the cross is now given to us with bread and wine in a Blessed Sacrament. This bread and wine which we eat and drink is the very Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus, the Christ. It is His true and substantial Body and Blood given to us in bread and wine. At this altar we receive the rewards of the sacrifice that He made on the cross. We receive forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation.

In the Gospel reading the people are given bread and fish. There is a subtle connection to the Body of Christ, and bread which we eat in the Lord's Supper. Bread and fish are connected to the Body and bread that we eat in this meal of forgiveness. The bread and fish that the multitudes ate satisfied their physical bodies; their hunger was sated. In the Sacrament of the Altar, it is our spiritual hunger and thirst that is sated. We hunger and thirst for righteousness; to be free from sin and death. By this Body and Blood of our Lord given in bread and wine we cleansed of all our sin, and made righteous in our Lord God's sight. Our desire to be free from sin is satisfied by this blessed meal.

This Gospel connects us to the Old Testament Passover, and connects us to the true Passover found in the Lord + Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross. It connects us to the defeat of the enemies of the Israelites; to the defeat of the enemies of the spiritual Israel, the Church, by the death of the Firstborn. We are given a connection to the bread and fish and the bread and Body of our Lord, too. There is one more connection made in this Gospel reading which is also a connection to the first Passover. For after the Israelites were rescued from their bondage in slavery to the Egyptians, the Angel of the Lord—the preincarnate Lord + Jesus—led them into the wilderness. There in the wilderness they were without food, and they craved to be fed.

The Lord God fed the people of Israel with bread from Heaven. He fed them with manna in the desert. Here in the wilderness the multitudes are fed by the Lord + Jesus with bread from Heaven. They ate and were filled. They ate as much as they wished to eat. Just as in the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites for forty years, the Lord provides the multitudes food—bread from Heaven. This also is a symbol. For the true bread which came down from Heaven is the Lord + Jesus Himself. He is the bread which has come down from Heaven to take upon Himself our flesh. He offers to us that flesh in the bread of His Supper for the remission of our sins.

By this bread which we eat, and this wine which we drink we proclaim the Lord's death on our behalf. We proclaim that this bread and wine is truly the Lord's Body and Blood given to us for the remission of all our sins. This bread and wine is a testament to us—our Lord's last will and testament to us—that He has come down from Heaven to be the Bread of Life for us poor sinners. So that all those who eat this meal firmly believing the words of Christ, have the gifts that He bestows through this precious meal. We are joined together with the Christ, He is in us, and we are in Him. We are united together with our High Priest, Who offered Himself up as a once and for all time sacrifice for us. In being united to our High Priest through this meal that remembers His sacrifice, we are also united together with one another as a people of God. We are now the true spiritual Israel; the people of the Lord God.

And our High Priest, Who offers Himself to us, Who proves us to learn something today that we will not forget, Who fed the crowds with bread, and feeds us with His Body and Blood, now becomes our King and Ruler. He took His place upon the throne of the cross. There He defeated the kingdom of

the devil and his demons. Now, my dear friends, we can look upon our Lord's sacrifice for us upon the tree of the holy cross, and know that we have a Ruler and King Who suffers and dies for us. He wins for us a Kingdom that is everlasting. In this Kingdom He richly and daily feeds and nourishes us by daily forgiving our contrite hearts.

Therefore, my dear friends, whence are we to buy bread? There is no need to buy that which our Lord + Jesus freely gives to us. He freely gives us of Himself. He gives to us the Bread of Life. Whoever eats this bread will never go hungry, for man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord God. The Word that our Lord + Jesus preaches is that He is the Living Bread come down from Heaven, so that He might defeat our enemies on the cross, and give to all those who cling to Him in faith and eternal, heavenly Kingdom, which has no end. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the 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!