

Laetare
St. John 6:1-15
March 10th, 2024
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

As Much as They Would

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“Jesus therefore took the loaves; and having given thanks, He distributed to them that were set down; likewise also of the fishes as much as they would. And when they were filled, He saith unto His disciples, ‘Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost.’ So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with broken pieces from the five barley loaves, which remained over unto them that had eaten.”

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.

My dear friends, after the Lord God rescued the Israelites from the bondage of slavery in the land of Egypt by the hand of Moses, He led them into the wilderness so that they might worship Him. On Mount Sinai He gave them His Law, the Ten Commandments. This Law declared to the Israelites that they would be His people, and if they kept His Law, He would be their Lord God. He had spoken this Law in their hearing. Upon hearing it they cowered in fear. They knew in their hearts that they were an unholy people; that they could not stand in the presence of a holy Lord God. They asked that Moses would intercede for them on their behalf; that he would speak to the Lord God and then report back to the people what He had said. So, Moses went up into the Mount of Sinai to commune with the Lord God. There He gave to Moses the Law written on two tablets of stone. This was the written covenant with the people of Israel that He would be their Lord God, and they would be His people.

But before the writing on the two tablets was even finished, they had already broken the very first Commandment: to have no other gods before the Lord God. They made a golden calf and declared it to be their god. This marked how it would be with the people of Israel as they were led by the Lord God through forty years of wilderness wanderings. They would always be searching after another god. They would always be complaining that the Lord God that was with them was not the One that was good enough for them. This was especially seen when they hungered in the wilderness. They longed for the days back in Egypt. They desired to be back under slavery in Egypt then be free. They had not learned yet, even though they had witnessed all the signs done against Pharaoh and the Egyptians,

that the Lord God would provide for them all of their needs.

He had already provided water from the rock. He had already shown them great signs and wonders in the land of Egypt. He had led them through on dry ground through the Red Sea and showed them the final defeat of Pharaoh and his army. Yet they still did not believe that the Lord God could provide for them whatever they needed. But the Lord God showed His power and might; He showed His love and care for His people, by providing for them food in the wilderness. He gave them the bread of Heaven—manna. With this bread from Heaven, He would feed the people of Israel throughout their forty years of wandering in the wilderness. The manna from Heaven continued until they had crossed over the Jordan River at their end of their wilderness wandering. This food was stopped only after they had eaten of the fruit of the Land of Promise; after they had entered into a land flowing with milk and honey. In this Promised Land the Lord God would provide for the Israelites whatever their needs were, just as He had done in the wilderness with the manna.

Fast forward to the present day of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Here was another Man like Moses, Who interceded for the people with the Lord God. But unlike Moses, the Lord + Jesus was the Son of God Himself. He was both God and Man. In Him the people of Israel had Someone with Whom they could commune just like Moses communed with the Lord God on Mount Sinai. They had already sensed that this Man + Jesus was the Messiah, the Anointed One sent from the Lord God. They had seen His signs and wonders. They had heard Him preach and teach. They had followed Him into the wilderness to see His signs and hear His preaching. The connection with the Lord God of the Old Testament Torah could not be missed.

Our Lord + Jesus then decides to make this connection *very* clear, so that nobody would fail to see the connection between the Lord God of the Old Testament and Him as the Son of God, the Messiah. Therefore, He asks St. Philip, “Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat?” The Apostle and Evangelist St. John tells us that He said this to “prove him.” He knew what He was about to do. He knew that He was about to show His Apostles, and the multitudes who had cometh unto Him, that He was the Lord God in the flesh; that the Lord God abided with mankind as a part of mankind.

St. Andrew points out to the Lord and His Apostles that there was a lad present who had five barley loaves and two small fish. So little could not feed five thousand men plus women and children. But with the Lord God all things are possible. With the Lord God all of mankind’s needs are met, especially the needs of those who cling to Him in faith; who follow Him in this life of wilderness to hear His Word and receive His good gifts.

The Lord + Jesus took the loaves and blessed them, and then distributed them to the multitudes seated in the grassy wilderness, as well as the fish. They ate and were filled. They received and ate as much as they would. The five thousand men plus women and children could not miss the connection between the miracle they just witnessed and the miracle of the bread from Heaven given to their ancestors, which they had heard about in their Scriptures since youth. Here in the wilderness the Lord + Jesus fed the multitudes with bread. They ate as much as they would. There were even twelve baskets of leftovers left after everyone ate their fill. Throughout their history only the Lord God had fed the people of Israel in such a manner. It was only the Lord God Who could provide for all of their needs. Only the Lord God Who created the Heavens and Earth by His Word alone could do such a thing.

This made them all realize that this + Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, the Anointed One of the Lord God. They sought to take Him by force and make Him their King, but He withdrew into the mountain to be alone.

As the multitudes in the wilderness could see the connection between the events of the Old Testament wanderings of the people of Israel, how the Lord God fed them with manna throughout their

forty years of wandering in the wilderness, so too can we not miss the connection between the bread of Heaven that our Lord + Jesus provides for us in the Blessed Sacrament. For it by bread that our Lord + Jesus feeds us, His people, with all of our spiritual needs and wants. By the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, we are given our Lord's true and substantial Body and Blood. By this Holy Sacrament our Lord does not just feed our bodies, but He feeds our very souls. With His precious Body and Blood given in bread and wine we receive the gifts that He won for us on the tree of the holy cross. We receive the forgiveness of all of our sins. We receive salvation from our enemies, and we receive the gift of an eternal life with Him in Heaven.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us not grumble and complain as the people of Israel did in the wilderness. Let us not seek after other gods as they did, but rather let us place our faith firmly in the Lord + Jesus and in His gifts to us. For as He spoke in a Voice on Mount Sinai and declared by the Law of God that they were His people, so too has He by the Word of God, both in the pure preaching of the Word of God, and in the right administration of the Blessed Sacraments, declared us to be His people. He has made us His people by sending to us His Holy Ghost to create and sustain faith in us by His means. By this bread and wine given in the Sacrament of the Altar He makes us to be His own dear people. By this meal He declares that our sins have been forgiven, and He will take us away from the bonds in which our spiritual enemies enslaved us, and He will bring us into the Promised Land of Heaven to live with Him and all the saints and angels forever and ever.

Let us therefore now turn our attention away from our breaking of the Law and our sinfulness, and turn our focus to the suffering and death of our dear Lord + Jesus, the Christ. For by His Passion, He redeems us from sin and death. By His Passion, He gives us all that we need for this life and the next. For by His Passion, He gives us His very Body and Blood as a testament that we are His people and that He is our Lord God. Thank be to the Lord + Jesus, our True and Only Lord God. 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!