

Laetare  
St. John 6:1-15  
March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
St. Bartholomew Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC  
Fort Myers, FL  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## He Himself Knew What He Would Do

*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.

My dear friends, today’s Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John stands in stark contrast to the rest of the Gospels for the Lenten season. All of the other readings present us with either the Lord battling the devil, or Him casting out demons, or people accusing Him of having a demon. All the other Gospels for the Lenten season focus upon our true enemy: the devil and his evil angels. We heard about our Lord being tempted by the devil in the wilderness. We heard about the Canaanitish woman whose daughter was grievously vexed with a demon. Our Lord last Sunday described the devil as a strong man who guards his goods—that is sinful mankind—with much strength and power. Next Sunday we will hear the Jews accuse our Lord + Jesus of being a Samaritan and having a demon. Every Gospel pericope has our Lord confronting the devil and his minions.

This is not so with today’s Gospel reading from St. John. Today, we hear about the feeding of the five thousand men, plus women and children in the wilderness. This is why this Sunday, Laetare Sunday, is sometimes referred to as “Refreshment Sunday.” We get a brief interlude from hearing about the battle which we face every day from the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh, and we get to be refreshed in receiving our Lord’s gifts. Our Lord feeds us with His Word and Sacraments whenever we gather together in this place. He feeds and nourishes us by the Holy Ghost. Our faith is strengthened and renewed by our participation in these salutary means; these saving means. For our faith is directed to the source of our salvation. It is directed to our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, Who has come down from Heaven to be our Lord and give us all of His saving gifts.

This is what our Lord + Jesus does for the multitude of five thousand men in the wilderness. He gives them sustenance to strengthen them physically. But this feeding of the five thousand is about more than our Lord giving food miraculously to a whole lot of people from only five barley loaves and

two fishes. This is why our Lord + Jesus knew what He was about to do when He asked St. Philip how to feed these five thousand men, plus women and children. The facts of the situation show us what the people who were there saw. It shows us why they were ready to take Him by force and make Him King. It is also why our Lord + Jesus feeds a whole lot of people twice in His earthly ministry. The second time being for four thousand men, plus women and children. We get to hear both of these narratives during the Church's year.

The facts of the situation are these: they are in the wilderness, they have no way to obtain food, and will faint on the way back to civilization. The scene is very similar to the condition of the Israelites after they were delivered by the Lord God, by the hand of Moses, from their slavery to Egypt. The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years, eating only the bread from Heaven: manna. In the wilderness, the Lord God provided bread for the people of Israel for forty years. The five thousand men who came to hear the preaching of the Lord + Jesus would have been fully aware of their history; they would have known about these facts. Just as we can remember how the Lord God took care of the people of Israel from our Bible instruction.

That these people in the wilderness were fed miraculously with bread by the Lord + Jesus told them that He was truly the Son of God. By this feeding they recognized Him to be the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One of the Lord God. He is the One sent to redeem Israel from all their enemies. This is why they wanted to take Him by force and make Him King. If He was the Messiah, and the Messiah would rescue them from their enemies, then they wanted that to happen as soon as possible, even if they had to use force to do it.

But our Lord + Jesus did not come to establish an earthly kingdom. He came to establish an eternal and heavenly Kingdom. He needs only to show the people that He is indeed the Son of God. He is the Lord God in our flesh. He has come down from Heaven to redeem His people. This is why He knew what He would do before He tested St. Philip. He knew that He was about to show this large crowd of people that He was the Messiah, by miraculously feeding them from five barley loaves, and two small fishes.

And He fed them abundantly. They ate as much as they would; as much as they desired to eat. They ate to their full. The manna in the wilderness was rationed to feed a certain amount of people. They were to collect an omer per person. An omer is about a quart. It was enough to sate their hunger. But here in the wilderness the Lord + Jesus does not limit the amount they can have. They could eat to their heart's content. This shows us our Lord's abundant mercy towards us as well.

They are fed with bread in the wilderness, as much as they desired. We are fed with a different kind of bread. We are fed with the bread of the Word of the Lord God. We are given this bread in the pure preaching of the Gospel, and in the right administration of the Blessed Sacraments. We receive the bread of Heaven spoke into our ears and in visible means. Through water and the Word, and through the Lord's Body and Blood given in bread and wine, we receive the Lord God's Word. By this Word it is not our bodies that receive satisfaction, but it is our souls. We receive the bread of Heaven which creates, renews, strengthens, and preserves our faith. And the good news is that we can "eat" of this bread as often and as much as possible. Whenever we gather together in this place, we receive the bread of the Word of the Lord God. We receive the means to strengthen our faith in Him.

Therefore, our faith trusts in Him alone. We trust in Him not to establish an earthly Kingdom, but we believe in and look forward to living in His eternal Kingdom in Heaven. There we will no longer suffer the daily temptations and woes which we do in this sinful life. We will no longer be troubled by sin and death. We will no longer have to daily battle the devil and the world. Nor will we have to suffer the evil lusts of our sinful flesh. There we will be free to eternally receive His gifts; to be eternally under His care and protection. There will be no more tears or sorrow. There will be no more strife or pain. There

we will be eternally comforted in our loving Father's embrace.

Today, in this Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John we get a picture—a foretaste—of the eternal refreshment that our Lord + Jesus has won for us by His death on the tree of the holy cross. The rest of the Lenten season draws our focus upon the daily battle with evil that we must face in this life. We are shown through those Gospel, however, that it is not us that needs to battle and win against our very strong adversaries. No, my dear friends, we are shown throughout the Lenten season how our Lord + Jesus thoroughly destroys the devil's kingdom. He battles the devil and demons, and casts them away and out from those they afflict. He does the same thing for us by His holy Word. By the Word of the Gospel, He strengthens our weak faith, and assures us of the victory which He won for us upon the tree of the holy cross.

He showed the five thousand men in the wilderness that He can provide for all of their earthly wants and desires. By the means of grace which we receive in the Divine Liturgy, our Lord shows us that He can provide for all of our spiritual needs to support us in this life, so that we may finally obtain from Him the crown of everlasting life.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us rejoice on this rejoicing Sunday; this day of Laetare, for our Lord + Jesus provides us on this day refreshment from all our woes and sorrows. He preaches into our ears that He has won for us forgiveness of our sins, eternal life in Heaven, and salvation from all our enemies on the tree of the holy cross. He distributes these gifts and rewards to us this day through the means of grace given through this Divine Liturgy in which we participate. May we all find refreshment from the battle that we face daily as we rest secure in the promises that our Lord + Jesus would feed us with. 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 the 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!*