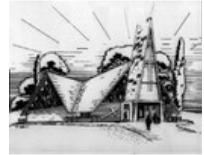




Free Evangelical Lutheran
Synod in South Africa

Sermon for the Ninth Sunday of Pentecost 2017

The Bread from Heaven!



St. John's Lutheran Parish
Shelly Beach

• [The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Mt 14, 13-21](#)

• ^{ESV} 13 And when Jesus heard, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place privately. And when the crowds heard, they followed him by land from the cities.

• 14 And when he had come out, he saw a large crowd, and he had compassion on them, and he healed their sick (ones).

• 15 But when it had become late, the disciples approached him and were saying, “The place is deserted, and the hour has already passed away. Dismiss the crowds in order that they may depart into the villages and buy food for themselves.”

• 16 But Jesus said to them, “They do not have a need to depart. *You* give them [something] to eat.”

• 17 But they did say to him, “We do not have [anything] here except five loaves and two fish!”

• 18 But he said, “Bring them here to me.”

• 19 And when he had commanded the crowds to recline on the grass and when he had taken the five loaves and the two fish and looked up into heaven, he blessed. And when he had broken [them], he gave the loaves to his disciples, and his disciples [gave them] to the crowds.

• 20 And all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the abundance of the fragments—twelve full baskets.

• 21 And the ones who were eating were about five thousand men, apart from women and children.

• *Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and our hearts so that the Jesus may feed us with the food from heaven. Amen.*

• **Dear Beloved of God!**

• The tension was rising between Jesus, the crowds and especially the Jewish Council, the Sanhedrin. Then king Herod, in his boastfulness, on his birthday celebration, was forced to kill John the Baptist. His resulting guilty consciousness made him say that Jesus was the resurrected John the Baptist, when he heard about Jesus.

• So, the real threat of death was starting to loom on the horizon for Jesus.

• When Jesus heard this, He went to this deserted place to be alone. He wanted to get away from the crowd.

• But, we hear, the crowds found out where He went and they followed Him! What was Jesus going to do? Would He chase them away? They were not interested in His teachings, His Word, so, one could expect that he would say, - 'well, you had your time to listen and follow me. I am speaking to you in riddles now, and still nobody comes and asks me what it means. You just want healing of the body, but your spirit you don't want to get healed,'- or something along that line. What did Jesus do?

• It says, when He saw the large crowd, [14] "*He had compassion on them*"! He didn't hold a grudge against them. He didn't write them off! This is massive! This is huge! How much more, does He not have compassion on you, you, who are His pearls, you, who are His treasure, you, who are His Body, you, who bear His Name?

• And we see, Jesus has compassion on their physical needs too. This sends out the message that God in Christ has come to re-establish His rule over all of creation. He desires to restore everything that is broken or twisted or amiss and dying. All the different realities of creation's brokenness give rise to the Saviour's compassion.

• One thing you can count on, Jesus sees your brokenness, Jesus sees the brokenness of the church, Jesus sees the brokenness of our country, of our family. He sees you and has compassion on all who suffer!

• It was a harsh setting, a deserted place, the disciples called the place. Right there in that wilderness, which is the opposite of paradise, right there Jesus fed the five-thousand plus!

• But, first we learn about the disciples' shortcomings in the face of the needs of the crowd. The disciples see that no-ways would they be able to organize enough food for so many. They leave Jesus out of the calculation. They simply don't reckon with Him. This place is deserted.

• Jesus, however refuses to let them go and He tells His disciples [16] "*you give them something to eat*"! Their failure to help them was all the more evident!

• Do you have hungry people around you, coming to you for food or clothing? Lots and lots of people. Don't we also, like the disciples then throw up our arms in despair saying or thinking, we do not have anything here except five loaves and two fish. What is that amongst so many?

• In other words, what does it help to even start handing out the little we do have?

• In the mean time their Master is standing right next to them. Yet, they are still not looking to Him to provide what is needed. In their utter embarrassment Jesus simply commands them to "*bring what they have to Him*"! Astonishing! The disciples are so helpless, but Jesus insists on using them. They have to bring all they have to Him. He will feed others through them! He will provide for the crowds physical and spiritual

needs through them! Take note, how blind the disciples are. Their assessment of the situation is according to human reasoning, well guys, look around you, here is no food, no stores even. Five loaves and two fish for five-thousand- it will never be enough.

- Strange, how we old Adams, we of little faith, so often fail to see the Master of the universe standing right next to us, even us who are His treasure, we are sometimes so blind too, and the more deserted the situation- lets relate this to our desolate economy- the easier we throw our hands in the air and say, *'oh well, what can we do, we have only so little time, only so little money, only so little strength, only so little helpers and so forth...'*!
- One thing we can be certain about, Jesus has compassion on all people who suffer. That's clear! And Jesus' compassion has power which sets His disciples in motion. They go out on His behalf and bring them in so that Jesus feeds the crowds through His disciples.
- Therefore, remember, wherever you are as treasure of Christ, as pearl of God, as body of Christ, baptised into Him, Christ is right with you. And where Christ is, that never is a desolate place! Where Christ is, everything is possible depending on His Will!
- The astonishing thing in the way that Jesus fed the five-thousand plus was, that the food never stopped. The only evidence of the miracle or sign was, the twelve baskets full of leftovers and the fact that all those people were satisfied.
- Now, as important as physical food is for our existence, we also know that Christ told His disciples earlier on that they should desire and search for the kingdom of God and all these things, including the bread, will be given to them. This is where Isaiah 55,1-2 [OT Reading] does come in which clearly connects physical eating and drinking with spiritual eating and drinking: *"Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David."*
- In other words, Jesus is helping the crowd in what we would say a super-natural manner and this in itself was a huge sign that He is the Son of Man, the Messiah, who came to satisfy their needs in both soul and body. But, we would see later on that not even His disciples understood at that stage that He was doing this to reveal that He was the true bread from heaven who was teaching them vital things concerning the

salvation of their soul and body.

• Just as Jesus was fully capable to satisfy them physically- as He had demonstrated it to them- just as capable was He to satisfy their spiritual needs, namely giving them forgiveness of sins, Life and salvation, God's Word. But this even the disciples would only get once Jesus was crucified, died and was resurrected.

• So, what does this imply for us? Jesus has redeemed us. He bought us to be His treasure. He made us His disciples and now He says to us, as the church as a whole, You feed them! We see, He blesses the little food we bring and hands it back to us to hand it out amongst the crowd on whom He has compassion. We come with His Word to Him, which we have heard, which we know from the Bible and He blesses it- He gives His Holy Spirit with the Word. He opens it up to us and we hand it out to the people in need, to the people who hunger and thirst for righteousness, and Jesus fulfils that Word. We don't need to be afraid, that it will ever run out, that we will have nothing more to say, or that it will stop satisfying people in need!

• In other words, don't say, we have only five breads and two fish, we have only so little, we have only forgiveness of sins, how is that enough for so many? Use and share what you have received today to satisfy the spiritually hungry, those yearning for hope, for God's sacrificial Love, for a clean consciousness, those longing to have a good standing with God, those who are down and out. Use what God gives to you and share it. It will be enough. In this way God will satisfy more than we would ever expect, more than you can see and fathom.

• The Word of God, the true Word of God, never returns empty. It always does for what it was sent out.

• As Jesus feeds you today with His Word and Sacraments, with His means of Grace, you go and share what you have received with 'you know who', because this is not a desolate place, Jesus is here with us, and everything we need is right here. The provider of all is with you. He is your redeemer and you are His treasure and His pearl. As you hand out His gifts, there are many more!

• So, we fall in with the Psalm [136,1] assigned to this Sunday: "*Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His steadfast Love endures forever.*" Amen.

• *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. (2 Cor 13, 14).*