

Pentecost 9 8/6/17
Matthew 14:13-21 13A

AND THEY ALL ATE AND WERE SATISFIED.

“The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food at the proper time. You open Your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing,”

with these words, the Psalmist reminds us that our daily bread comes from God (Ps 145).

This is what the Bible teaches us. In the Old Testament, after God led His people Israel to freedom from the bondage of Egypt through the Red Sea waters, they “grumbled against Moses and Aaron, ‘If only we had died by the LORD’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death (Ex 16).’” God opened His hand and rained down upon them bread from heaven. In the morning, after the dew was gone, thin flakes of bread appeared on the ground. They people saw it and said, “What is it?” In Hebrew, their words were but one word, “manna,” and, so, the bread God gave them to eat got its name.

The New Testament also teaches us that God opens His hand to satisfy the desire of every living thing. The crowd following Jesus was in the wilderness and He, very God of very God, fed them with the loaves and the fish. “They all ate and were satisfied,” the Evangelist tells us.

Jesus wanted to get away from it all. He had gone home to Nazareth. But, He was not welcomed there. In fact, He was ridiculed and rejected, and told to leave and never come back. His favorite cousin was beheaded by Herod for calling out the king for taking his brother’s wife. So, He withdrew to a “desolate place by Himself.” When the people heard that

Jesus was there, they came in droves from the surrounding towns, pressing in upon Him.

Mark tells us that Jesus taught them. Matthew tells us that He healed their sick. They became hungry and all that they had was 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. So, Jesus fed them. He fed them so that they all ate and were satisfied, with 12 baskets filled with leftovers.

With this miracle, Jesus is bringing to our remembrance the feeding of Israel with the manna. The miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 teaches us WHO Jesus is: He is true God. In the Old Testament, God fed His people in the wilderness and, now, God feeds His people in the wilderness.

And, the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 teaches us that God is LOVE. Matthew tells us, "He had compassion on them." They had nothing to give God, no merit or worthiness in them. God simply opened His hand and satisfied the desire of every living thing with Him in that wilderness.

Why do we need to be reminded who Jesus is and His love for us? Because we forget, just as the disciples forgot. They forgot that Jesus, very God of very God, was with them in that wilderness.

In our lesson, they came to Jesus with a problem: "this is a desolated place". And, if that were not bad enough, "the day is now over".

Jesus, wanting them to remember that He was with them, commanded them, "You, yourselves, give them something to eat." Jesus words were a MIRROR for them to see their helplessness and look in faith to Him.

It is true. We are no different than the disciples. We are beggars before God. The woes of life overtake us, and we are weak; we are helpless. We are afraid and overwhelmed by the darkness in the valley of the shadow of death.

Like the people who came to Jesus, we have nothing to offer God. We can do nothing to earn or deserve God's grace. In the 9th chapter of Romans, Paul directs us away from ourselves to the loving heart of God, "It depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has MERCY" (Ro 9).

The Good News of the Gospel is that Jesus has compassion on us. He literally become one with us, taking on our human flesh, and taking on all of our griefs, and sorrows, and ills, and our death itself. He took them all upon Himself and carried them to Calvary's cross. And, just as He healed the sick in our lesson, He has healed us of our terminal illness of sin, for we are forgiven in the blood of Jesus, shed all over that cross.

There, nailed to that wooden rod of torture, He was rejected, abandoned, by God the Father, to die our death, in our place. And the Good News for you in that, Dear Child of God, is that because Jesus was rejected, you will be rejected nor abandoned by God your Father. Cherish and cling to His promise, "I will never leave you for forsake you" (He 13:5b).

He who promised, "I am with you always," is here today (Mt 28:20). And yes, He, "very God of very God," opens His hand to satisfy the desire of every living thing.

As the crowd came to Jesus, we come. We come here, to the worship services of God's House. As God served the crowd in our lesson, God serves us in our worship. He taught them and He fed them. Here, today, He continues to do the same -- He teaches and He feeds. He teaches you that you are a sinner and that He has died for sinners such as you. He feeds you with His grace -- in your baptism, when you eat His Body and drink His Blood, as you hear the Word proclaimed -- so that you may cling to Him in faith as your Savior, bear the burdens of earthly life,

and always, always, rejoice that He has a place in heaven for you. Taught and fed with the grace of God in Jesus, we are satisfied.

Our compassionate Savior has called us to faith and will keep us in our faith. As He cares for us spiritually, He gives us His compassion in supplying us all of our daily bread, as well. Luther puts it this way in His Little Catechism,

What is meant by daily bread? “Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.”

These are the things we need to make life sweet. When God created the heavens and the earth, everything functioned for one thing -- to serve man. But, of course sin ruined all of that. After the fall, we must work by the sweat of our brow. But, God wants life to be sweet for us. He wants us to devote our lives to living by His will, not WORRYING where our daily bread will come from. So, God opens His hand and gives us our daily bread, so that we may be satisfied.

A word of caution is called for here, mainly to curb the desires and wants of the sinful flesh. We must be careful here not to misunderstand Jesus and make Him into some type of golden goose or a magic genie. Yes, He multiplied the loaves and the fish. But, we make a mistake if we think He is going to always work this way for us. Jesus has never promised to give us what we think He should, or do as we command Him to do. He has promised to open His hand and give us our daily bread, as He knows best for our bodies and life.

This is why we pray in our collect for this Sunday: “Heavenly Father,

though we do not deserve Your goodness, still You provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may acknowledge Your gifts, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience.”

To God be the Glory. Amen.