

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobnier, Illinois
Pentecost 9A - Proper 13A
August 2, 2020
Matthew 14:13-21
A Free Lunch

Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves." 16 But Jesus said, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." (Matthew 14:15-16 ESV)

Dearly Beloved in Christ:

Did you come here to eat? If so, what are you hungry for? Steak, chicken, pork, tomatoes, sweet corn, other fruits or vegetables, cookies, cake, pie, ice cream, or, maybe, chocolate? Is that why you're here today? I pray not, though God will supply your daily bread. Indeed, I pray you have come here to eat, to hunger and thirst for righteousness, and to feast on Jesus' Word and the banquet He sets before you. And having eaten, you will be satisfied.

Jesus had gone to the wilderness for some alone time with His disciples. He had much to teach them. But when Jesus came ashore, He sees a crowd who had come from the villages and towns. They had brought their sick and infirm wanting Jesus to heal them. They were hoping that Jesus would give strength to those "without strength." And they weren't disappointed. But there was more to Jesus than a healer or miracle worker.

Are we ever like the crowd? Do we seek Jesus only for our own desires? Do we pray as though God were merely a genie to grant our every wish? Do we often see Jesus only, or at least primarily, as security for this life, without much thought to eternal life? Do we look for Jesus to do miracles in our life, to heal us or our loved ones, without giving much thought to who He really is or what He has really done for us?

Or are we often like the disciples that day? It was late afternoon, and when they looked at the sea of humanity that had gathered, they were concerned because they didn't want a hungry mob on their hands. So they ask Jesus to send the people away to buy their own food. They thought the best way to solve the problem was to send it away. Out of sight, out of mind.

Yet, they knew where to go to find help, even if the solution they sought was wrong. And we do that too. We often try to get rid of a problem rather than solve it. We often rely too much on our own abilities rather than on the One who can do all things. Too often, we don't really believe that God is sufficient, and that He provides *all* that we need.

In response, Jesus turns the tables on them. He says, "You give them something to eat." They must have thought that Jesus was joking. How could the disciples ever hope to feed this many

people? After all, they had only five loaves of bread and two fish. Truly, what are they among so many? It was hardly enough to feed themselves. They had neither the food on hand, nor the means of attaining enough food, for such a multitude. So what did Jesus have in mind?

For one thing, Jesus wanted them to come face to face with their deficiencies and inadequacies so they would see Him as the only alternative. He wanted them to trust in Him for *everything*. So, Jesus said, "Bring them here to Me." "Bring Me your five loaves and two fish." "Bring Me everything you've got." And they did.

Upon receiving the bread and fish, Jesus looked up to heaven, from whence all blessings flow, blessed and broke the bread, gave it to the disciples to give to the people. They did. Those disciples did what Jesus had said; they gave the people something to eat. All of them, every man, woman, and child, all 5,000 plus, ate until they were filled and satisfied. And if that weren't enough, there were twelve baskets of food remaining. Enough for each disciple to be filled as well. What a miraculous meal! From five loaves and two fish the entire crowd had been filled. And there was plenty to spare!

Beloved, there is something here for us too. For starters, it shows us Jesus' great compassion for us. He heals us who are "without strength." We have no strength to save ourselves from our sin. So through His tender compassion He became incarnate of the Virgin Mary. He took our sins upon Himself. He took away all our sins when He gave His very life for us and died on the cross. He washed them away in our Baptism. He truly has healed us of our sin.

Furthermore, He feeds us with a meal no less miraculous than that fed to the 5,000. He fills us with the Bread of Life. Indeed, He is that very Bread as He declares in John 6 (:35). And as we eat His body and drink His blood, as we trust in Him for the full forgiveness of sins, our souls are satisfied. As we hunger and thirst for righteousness, He fills us with Himself - freely and in great abundance. The lunch we're given here is free to us with no strings attached, but it cost Jesus His life. He indeed has had compassion on us sinners.

But we also need to see that while Jesus had healed the people directly and personally, He did not feed them personally. Rather, He gave to His Apostles, His sent ones, and had them give to the people. So it is today. God works through means, other people, to provide our daily bread. And He works through the Office He established to give spiritual gifts to people. So when our Lord feeds you with living bread, He does so through your pastor. Yet, it is not anything in me which satisfies you. As was the case with the disciples, I simply don't have the resources to do that. Rather, the Lord and Savior of us all speaks His Word and performs His Works through me as His servant. When I bring nothing of myself, but solely the Words and Works of Jesus, then, and only then, can I say with confidence that I have fed you with the Bread of Life and satisfied your deepest hunger and need. I can only feed you what Christ gives me to give to you.

Yet, that is not all. For our Lord also serves others through you. And no matter how meager and inadequate your resources may be, they are plenty when they are given fully to Christ to use as He sees fit. For as St. Paul writes, "Our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. 3:5). So when we give to

the Lord, our gifts, our time, our abilities, He is the One who blesses it. He is the One who multiplies what we give to make it more than enough to do His work. He is the One who supplies all that is needed. And this in spite of ourselves and our unbelief.

Yes, with Jesus we do get a free lunch. For in Jesus we find a Savior who has such compassion on us that He gave His very life for us. He gives us our daily bread, that is, all that we need to support this body and life, and that in abundance. He feeds us with the Bread of Life so that our souls are satisfied. And, lest we think there is not enough, we are assured, by the 12 baskets of leftovers, that our Lord has more than we need for this life as well as plenty of compassion and forgiveness to go around. So come to the feast our Lord spreads before you. "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. . . . Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food." (Is. 55:1-2). It's the best meal you'll have today. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

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