

Readings and Sermon Transcript for March 27, 2022

Readings: Isaiah 49:8–13, Galatians 4:21–31, John 6:1–15

The Lord Feeds His People

The Lord provided bread from heaven for His people in the wilderness (Ex. 16:2–21). Now He who is Himself the living bread from heaven miraculously provides bread for the five thousand (John 6:1–15). This takes place near the time of the Passover, after a great multitude had followed Jesus across the sea, and when He went up on a mountain. Seen in this way, Jesus is our new and greater Moses, who releases us from the bondage of Mount Sinai and makes us free children of the promise (Gal. 4:21–31). Five loaves become twelve baskets—that is, the five books of Moses find their goal and fulfillment in Christ, whose people continue steadfastly in the doctrine and fellowship of the twelve apostles, and in the breaking and receiving of the bread of life, which is the body of Christ together with His precious blood, and in the prayers (Acts 2:41–47). So it is that God's people "shall not hunger or thirst" (Is. 49:8–13). For He abundantly provides for us in both body and soul.

SERMON:

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

So in Isaiah, we have this promise. Now, if you look at what is given in Isaiah, He promises to make a covenant with His people. He promises to answer us on a day of good favor. On a day of salvation, He will help us. And then it describes all these things, that the prisoners come out and those who are in darkness appear. And then we have that they shall be fed along the ways and the heights of pasture. "They will neither hunger nor thirst." And you see the beginnings of the fulfillment of this prophecy with Jesus. Jesus does indeed heal the blind. He frees the prisoners from the sin, the bondage of their calamities, the bondage of their infirmities. He frees them from that.

In fact, He quotes this in other passages in Isaiah when John the Baptist is in prison, remember, and he's questioning whether Jesus is actually going to do the Messiah thing that John thought He was going to do. And Jesus says, "Yeah, look at what the Scriptures say. 'The prisoners will be free. The lame will walk. The blind will see. And those who are sinners will receive salvation.'" And Jesus answers John's question in a way that John did not expect. It's more than what John expected. It's greater. And it's beyond what we even can imagine.

Now, all of this stuff that is promised in Isaiah, all of it sounds wonderful. I mean, "The scorching heat or wind shall not strike them." In the middle of August in Florida, that sounds like a wonderful thing. It truly does. But it has not yet fully happened, because this passage in Isaiah is not really honestly about the here and the now. It's not really about our life here on Earth. Because in this world, we will have trouble. Jesus says that very clearly. So it's clear that these things will not be fully fulfilled in the here and the now. We get a foretaste of the events that are going to take place. We get a glimpse of the glory of God. We get a glimpse of the feast that is to come when we celebrate and gather together and eat the body and the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, for the assurance of life everlasting. We get a foretaste, we say, of the feast to come.

The feeding of the 5,000, miraculous as that was, and as also a sign and a symbol, think about this, the bread never ended. It just kept on going as long as people needed it. And the fish, the same thing. The physical properties of the food was enhanced and blessed by the presence and the Word of God. The Word of God caused the material elements to do something they could not do normally. Five loaves of bread could not normally feed 5,000 men, children, and women along with them. And yet with the Word of God, those five loaves of bread can do miraculous things.

As in bread and wine, that's not going to fulfill you. That's not going to sustain you. That little wafer and a little sip of wine is really not going to do much of anything, except that it is connected with the Word of God. And therefore, it is life and forgiveness of sins. Therefore, His Word has been applied to the bread and the wine, and now it is His body and blood, along with the bread and wine, to sustain us for that day of salvation. More than just filling our bellies or giving us a nice, comfortable thought or beautiful thought, it is life-giving.

And that's what the sign of the feeding of the 5,000 was all about. See, it was a miraculous sign. I mean, it's amazing. He goes up on the mountain and there's people following Him. Why? Because they want to see signs and wonders. We know, in fact, that not all of them are going because they actually want to hear the Word of God. They're fed by this 5,000. And then Jesus goes away again and everybody chases after them, after Him again. And they say, "We want more." And Jesus basically, rather than saying, "Oh, come on in. Let me coddle you a little bit and help you," no, He confronts them and says, "You're only coming because I filled your belly and you want to see it happen again."

And then He goes on, later on in John 6, He talks about, "Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you're not part of my kingdom." That frightens everybody and most of them turn away, because they don't want to actually hear the Word of God, they just want to be satisfied in the here and the now. They want peace in our time. They want prosperity and wealth and calmness in their life. I mean, let's face it. Which one of us doesn't, especially as we look around the world today? How many of us don't wish for a peaceful life? How many of us have been praying that this life would just calm down a little bit, that the chaos that is going on would finally stop? And that's not even considering what's going on in our own personal lives on a day-to-day basis, the struggles that we face every day, that sometimes we say, "God, when is enough?"

But you see, God isn't just concerned with the here and now. He wants us to be focused upon His Word that we might be nourished and sustained by His Word, no matter what or, oftentimes, in spite of the circumstances that we find ourselves in. He wants us to lean upon Him and trust His Word to sustain us. Because we can drink water and the very next second we'll be thirsty. We can eat food and the very next mealtime we'll be hungry. We can rest and the very next night we're ready for rest again. Maybe the next noon we're ready for rest again. But we can do all these things and they sustain us for a moment. But God wants us to focus on that which sustains for all eternity. And that is His Word.

And so we feast upon His Word. We focus upon the Word of God because the Word of God is life. Because not only do we have the world out there showing us that chaos and confusion and heartache and trouble are part of our lives, we also have the Word of God itself, the Law of God, which condemns us. The Law of God which says, "Look, if you want to be right with God by your own efforts, then this is what you have to do. Have no other gods. Do not misuse my name. Honor the Sabbath day. Honor your father and mother. Do not commit murder, adultery, lying, stealing, and covetousness and various other things."

Now, all of that sounds good on the surface, but if we are looking to that, if we look to ourselves and our own efforts for our hope and our promise, we'll find it falls short. We'll find that we can't really solve the problems of this world yet alone the problems of our own lives. We still have to face the body's decay. We still have to face the trials and tribulations that are going on. See, the Law was given. The purpose of the Law really was to enslave us, to show us that we are in desperate need of salvation.

The Law shows us we are condemned before God and we are lost, without any hope, we are dead in our sins and trespasses. And again, a dead person cannot do a whole lot to make himself alive. So there's nothing we can do. We're dead. And yet the Word, that Word that we are called to rely upon, the Word of promise that says, "I have come in a day of salvation," He says in Isaiah, "I have come to give you life, life in my name," if we hold fast to that Word and that Word comes to us, then we are alive in Christ by the power of His Word which sustains us for all eternity, not just this meal. The Word of God is what we are to hold fast to. This is why we rejoice.

We've been talking the last three weeks, was Jesus being tempted by Satan? Then the Canaanite woman who was praying that her daughter might be released from a demon. And then the mute man who had a demon who was removed from him. All of this oppression, this evil that is in this world that we've been focusing upon, the idea that we in this world are going to face troubles and that Satan is actively trying to attack us and deceive us. And where do we find our hope? How can we rejoice in this current life? We rejoice in the promises of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that we are not children of the slaves or the slave woman. We are children of the free. We are children of Abraham, bought with His precious blood on the cross, given to us in our baptisms that we might be called the children of God. And as children, we are His heirs. And if we are His heirs, then we will receive the inheritance that God has promised.

And Jesus is the first fruits. What did He inherit? He died and He rose again to new life, life everlasting. That is our inheritance. Yet we die, yet also shall we live. By the power of His Word given to us through the presence of the Holy Spirit, we are alive in Christ. We are satisfied and nourished through His Word so that we might be sustained and lifted up in the trials of this world. We are reminded that no matter what may come, no matter what trials and tribulations we personally face, no matter what trials and tribulations this world goes through, we have hope, assurance and promise because His Word has called us by name and His Word sustains us from this world throughout our whole entire lives and to death, and then, again, to life everlasting.

Rejoice in the Lord always. And again, I say rejoice, for His Word is with you. You are His children. And you, He will never falter, He will never fail you. He is enough to satisfy you. No matter what may come, trust in the Lord and hold firm to His Word each and every day. Then you may rejoice in all circumstances.

May that grace and that mercy and that peace be and abide with you always, now and forever more unto life everlasting. Amen.