

## Seventh Sunday after Trinity, July 23, 2023

**Readings:** Genesis 2: 7-17, Romans 6: 19-23, Mark 8: 1-9

### ***Jesus Restores Paradise and Feeds Us Freely***

In the Garden of Eden, our first parents received food freely from the gracious hand of God, apart from any burdensome work (Gen 2:7–17). But after the fall, food would be received only through toil and labor. The curse declared, *“By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground . . .”* (Gen. 3:19). In other words, *“The wages of sin is death”* (Rom. 6:23). But into this wilderness world came Jesus the Messiah to restore creation. Having compassion on the weary multitudes, He renewed the bounty of Eden on the third day, freely granting an abundance of bread to the 4,000 (Mark 8:1–9). So also our Lord Jesus, having endured the burden of our sin, was raised on the third day to bring us back to Paradise. He now miraculously turns the bread of death into the Bread of Life in the Sacrament, giving you His very body and blood for your forgiveness. For *“the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Rom. 6:23).

### **Sermon Transcript**

*{Initial section was not recorded}*

... consciousness and righteousness. And Paul wants us to understand that we are slaves of one or the other. Now, as Americans, we like to think of our freedom, how we control our destiny and what we do and how we live. But we need to understand that that is tempered. Our entire lives are controlled, without Christ, are controlled by our sin, by our evil thoughts and desires. And that we need to understand the depth of what that does to us. See, it's not just that we sometimes do some bad things and we need a slap on the wrist because, "You bad person, try better next time." It's much deeper than that, "For the wages of sin is death." We need to understand what that means. There is not a whole lot of comfort in that.

When Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, there were two trees; the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They ate that tree and at that moment they died. They ate the tree of the knowledge of good evil and they died spiritually. They were no longer holy before God. Their lives had been destroyed. Now, eventually that spiritual death, then one of the symptoms of that was eventually the physical death. But they died that day. And now we are trying to figure out what we need in order that we might come alive again.

And so Paul is telling us that in our own selves, the only thing we can do is lawlessness, leading to more lawlessness, leading to more lawlessness, leading to death. You see, when we as Christians speak against sin, or when I as a pastor declare to you that you are to cease sinning, to stop those sins, it's not that the church is doing that just to be a killjoy. We're not just saying, "Don't sin," because we don't want anybody to have fun. We are saying that because we understand what happens if we allow sin to rule our lives, and that is death. Physical death, yes, but spiritual death as well. A separation of us from God.

I've said before, this world is kind of chaotic and messed up, but God is still with us. Imagine if His presence wasn't here at all, what would it be like? But we need to understand the depth of our sin. Because there's sin that we know is evil, I mean, that's easy. We can point to certain sins and we can say, "Oh, yeah, that's evil. Avoid that." And then there's the sins that are our own personal sins that we like and we try and excuse and find a way to explain why it's okay for us to do those. That that's okay because they're not as bad as those other sins that other people do.

But beyond that, there's sin that we don't even recognize as sin. We don't even know it's sin. We don't even understand how it is sin. And so we need to be warned and we need to be told that all of that leads not to an

uncomfortable life, not to a slap on the wrist, but to death itself, eternal death. And so we do not want to be slaves to that. However, it's kind of hard for us to accept being slaves of righteousness or slaves of God, partially because here in America we just don't like the term slavery. It just has really bad connotations from our history.

But we need to take the history of America out of it when we think about slavery in the Bible. When we think about slavery, it's talking about how are we controlled? What controls us? And Paul is encouraging us and exhorting us to be controlled by righteousness. When, what is that righteousness? How are we controlled by it? It says that it is leading to sanctification, but the sanctification, lest you think you don't have it, the sanctification is us becoming what God has already declared us to be. Let's unpack that for a moment. We are free to serve God, but we choose to take that freedom and subject ourselves to His will in our lives.

In baptism, we were adopted into the family of God. We were grafted into His kingdom. And so as children of God, our desire ought to be to want to do what is pleasing to our dad. I mean, think about little kids. If they ever do something, what do they want? They want to say, "Mom, Dad, did you see this? Can you watch me? See what I did?" They want their dads and moms to see what they're doing and to approve of what they're doing so that they can say, "Well done. Good job. I love that. You're doing great." Every kid wants to hear that from their parents, and every parent in a good relationship with their kids will give that to them.

Well, that's the same thing in our relationship with God. God is our parent, our Father in heaven. And our goal should be to want Him to see what we're doing so that we might give glory to Him. "Dad, do you see what's going on?" Now, admittedly, that's what we should be doing. So often, unfortunately, we don't quite live up to that. But that's the life of a Christian. One is understanding that even though we on a day-to-day basis may not live up to God's desire for us, we understand that we are forgiven, and He sees us as being righteous and holy. Not because of us, but because of Christ within us. Because on the cross He died and shed His blood and that blood was given to us and connected to us in our baptisms. And therefore, now God sees us as holy and righteous. Not only does He see us, He declares us to be holy and righteous. We are righteous in His eyes. Now that we know that, now that we know He loves us, now that we know He has given us the free gift of eternal life, our desire is to thank Him and praise Him, to serve Him and to obey Him, out of joy and thanksgiving, so that we might know the peace that surpasses all understanding. And we do this because we know that God as our Father gives us all good things.

I mean, you look at this, what Jesus did in the wilderness here. This is the second of the feeding of multiple people. There's a feeding of the 5,000 and there's a feeding of the 4,000. Actually, it's a feeding of 5,000 plus women and children, so I don't know how many that was total. And then this one is more than 4,000 people, so two different events. The 5,000 is on the hilltop in a pasture in green grass. This one is in a desolate place. The other one, He crossed the lake and they chased after Him. This one, they've been following Him for three days.

And they've been following Him for three days and they're hungry. And Jesus knows they're hungry, so He feeds them. And how does He do it? With seven small loaves of bread and a couple of fish. Like the same thing with the feeding of the 5,000, just a few loaves of bread and some fish and it feeds the entire group.

If He can do that in the wilderness, how much more can He take care of your daily needs? Do you think He does not know what you need to support this body in life? Do you think that He's not going to give it to you? Do you think that what He gives you and promises you is not good? It is good, always. But sometimes we don't always see it that way. And that's part of us understanding what God is doing, part of us striving for righteousness and sanctification, is that sometimes in our life bad things happen. There's illness and sickness and chaos and war and death and all sorts of other problems. And yet even in those things, we can be confident that God is giving us what is good.

It may not feel good at the moment, but we know that it is always good. Because we know that eventually this world is going to end. So if we suffer in this world, it is God cleaning out the dross and that which distracts us,

that which keeps us from understanding the peace that surpasses all understanding. When we suffer, we don't have to cry, "Why me, oh God?" but rather, "God, take care of me. You have promised." You see, when we suffer, we learn how faithful our God is. We learn that He will provide even in the midst of trials and tribulations.

See, the Bible is not written as a Pollyanna idea that if you believe in God, everything will be nice and good and you won't have any other problems ever again. No, it's real. It's serious. It knows that in this world we will have trouble. But it says, "Take heart. I have overcome this world." And take heart because we know that this world is not the end. We're not waiting around for this world to continue. We're waiting around for God to come to restore the world to what it was, what it was supposed to be, the new heavens and the new Earth.

I mean, think about what that's going to be like. He has promised you this is your reward. This is the gift that He gives to you. Adam and Eve were in the garden and I find it interesting. God put man in the garden to work it and to keep it. Now, this was before the fall. What was there to work at in the garden when there were no thorns and no thistles and you didn't need to plow the land and you didn't need to work the soil of the plant, it just grew? Well, work was there.

Well, let's see. "Let's pick the right fruit and eat it. Let's talk with the animals and play and serve God and give Him glory." That's the work. I mean, when I think of work, it's a lot more sweat involved, especially here in Florida. But here to work and to keep it in the Garden of Eden where everything is perfect and everything is given to you as a gift by God, that's the kind of work I look forward to. That's the kind of work in life that I want to have. And that's the kind of work in life that God has promised us.

So, He gives us all good things. The wages of sin is death. And we should seek to avoid our unrighteousness, to seek after His Word, because we know that He has given us our salvation. We don't seek to live a sanctified life because we have to, because otherwise God won't like us or love us. We seek to live a sanctified life because He has already demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt that He loves you, that He has forgiven you, and that He has made you righteous before Him. And therefore, there is nothing to be afraid of. That is what He has promised, and that is why we love to thank and praise Him and to serve and obey Him.

May the joy of your salvation and His grace and mercy and peace be and abide with you always, now and forevermore, unto life everlasting. Amen.