

Bread For Life In The Wilderness

Mark 8:1-9

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place? Actually, the word translated “desolate place” is translated in other places as “wilderness.” When Jesus was taken out into the “wilderness” to be tempted, it is the same Greek word used there.

This great crowd had followed Jesus, and now they are a long way from Econo Foods. There isn't even a Kwik Trip nearby. There is no way to get food for this mass of people. What will we do?

You and I live each day in the wilderness, but do we realize it? The concerns of everyday life seem rather mundane. We are not in danger of starving. As Americans we have it pretty good. We drive most places, and usually only walk because we need the exercise – that's how good we have it.

But we are living in the wilderness; it is a desolate place.

With people all around us, we live lonely and desperate lives. We text, we snap chat, we Facebook, and we stare at the TV. Our interaction with others is oftentimes minimal.

There are the problems we face because we are in the wilderness. Maybe it is some illness that is robbing us of health. Possibly we struggle with depression. Sometimes it is a broken relationship with someone we previously called friend which causes us grief.

Don't believe we live in the wilderness? How many police officers are dead or hospitalized this past week? How much hatred is there in this country for those who were created by God, in His image, for whom His only begotten Son died, but might simply have a different amount of melanin in their system? By the way, melanin is the pigment in the skin which causes the different colors of skin, and by which some erroneously call races? By the way, there is only one race – the human race.

We all deal with different things that arise in our lives. Satan is constantly tempting us to fall away from God, tempting us to give up on God, bringing trials, tribulations, pain, and sorrow into our lives. Sinfulness stains us all and causes us to be disobedient to God, and to cause hurt and harm in body, heart, and mind to those who, like us, share His image – albeit in a fallen manner.

My friends, we live in the wilderness, a desolate place, the world. Just like little Bryleigh had done to her this morning, in our baptism, each of us was made a child of God. That means dear friends, that heaven is our home. We do not live at home. However, we live in mortal flesh in a sin filled world. We live in a desolate place, for our world is full of those things that are incredibly hostile to the children of God. We live in a hostile environment which is at war with us and our faith.

In the wilderness we look for something, anything, that will give us the strength and nourishment to survive and flourish. We think that bread is nice, but we need more than that. You may think, “this service today is nice, but we need more than this.” Too often, we see this as nothing more than, same old, same old. There must be more to spiritual nourishment than just this.

I have heard it said, “If we were to have communion every week, it will become meaningless.” “If we do the same service every week, it will lose its significance.” It is just bread and wine; it just represents Christ's body and blood. It isn't really His flesh and His blood, is it? You don't really believe that, do you?”

Dearly beloved of God, when we come together for the Divine Service, we are the crowd in our text, gathered

around Jesus, wondering, just like the disciples, "How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place? How can this service nourish us for life in the world? There must be something else that we need!"

So, where can we go? How can we be fed? To quote our text, "How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?" Dearly beloved friends, hear Christ speak about the bread of life from John's Gospel.

"Truly, truly, I say to you... my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger." (John 6:32-35 ESV)

Who is present here today, feeding us? Christ! He is the very Word of God which spoke everything into existence – "Let there be..." and there was! And it was good.

Now, did you hear what happened in our text this morning? I would guess it is very familiar to you. Jesus directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. And **He took** the seven loaves, and **having given thanks, he broke** them and **gave** them to his disciples to set before the people.

Did you hear it? He took the bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them. And what happened? Four thousand were fed! Four thousand were fed from seven loaves AND seven baskets were picked up of leftovers.

He took the bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them and said, "take eat; this is my body." But it only represents His body? Seriously? Four thousand were fed from seven loaves. He did not do that miracle to feed those people. He could have just as easily told them to go home to eat and simply made them strong enough to get home.

He did the miracle in our text to set the tone for the supper of His flesh and blood. You see dear friends, just as we heard from John's Gospel, Jesus is the very bread come down from heaven, who gave His life for the world. He feeds us as He fills us with Himself as the Word. Jesus, as He fed the four thousand, satisfying their hunger, so also today.

My friends, are you not fed to overflowing? Is there not an abundance left over? Our entire service is the Word of God for you - Christ the Word, the bread of life - feeding you for life in the wilderness, the desolate place of this world.

Dearly beloved, our service is not some set of mundane words we repeat when we gather together. It is the Word of God, present here, filling us with Himself. Not just words that speak of things, but the very Word of God, the Bread of Life, who is and who does things. When the Bread of Life is present, people are fed and nourished for life in the wilderness.

Today, Christ came to forgive you for thinking that you need more than the gifts He comes to give to you. Yes, it was the same words you have heard so many times before. But those are powerful words, the very Word of God came to you in those words.

That Word came to Bryleigh with the water and took a sinner and made her a saint. That Word removed sin. It was a Word which adopted her into the family of faith, for in that miracle she drowned. She was buried with Christ and raised to a new life.

This same Word of God made flesh, Jesus the Christ, has cleansed you from the filth of the wilderness. He nourishes you with Himself so that you would never hunger.

Soon, you will approach the table He has set for you. It doesn't look like much, simple bread and wine. In fact, it is the same bread and the same wine we had the last time we had communion. It is the same bread and the same wine we will have the next time we commune. It doesn't appear to be much, but it is an overabundance of

God's grace poured out for you when Christ was crucified.

My friends, today we come to Christ's table to be fed His body and blood. Today, in this service, we are fed the Bread of Life. We are fed in His Word and His sacrament, given for you and to you in this Divine Service. Through this miracle, we are fed the Bread of Life in the wilderness. And in this feeding, we are kept unto life everlasting. Amen.