

7th Sunday after Trinity: July 18th, 2021

“Bread of Compassion”

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Mark records, ***“In those days, when again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat, [Jesus] called his disciples to him and said to them, ‘I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way.’”***¹

In Eden, before sin entered into creation due to Adam’s disobedience, Adam and Eve received food from God’s gracious hand apart from any burdensome work. Any labor done by Adam, if one could call it labor, would have been nothing but joyful and another opportunity to rejoice in the Lord. Any task he would’ve put his hand to, the Lord would have blessed and granted success, causing it to yield a hundredfold, such as we see with the naming of the animals; but the Fall changed and destroyed that.

Now man would work the ground and his labor would be hard. He would sweat and bleed. He would work his hands raw and have nothing to show for it. The ground was cursed because of him. He himself, taken from the ground, was cursed. He would toil and labor, sweat and eat until he would finally die—returning to the dust from which he came.

You know this better than you care to admit. Adam’s curse is yours. St. Paul writes, ***“Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?”***² In the fallen state of man, the sinful nature revels in presenting, ***“your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness.”***³ This happens far too often than we care to admit. While boasting about the land of the free and being a masters of your own destiny, with the liberty to choose whatever makes you happy, your sinful

¹ Mark 8:1–3

² Romans 6:16

³ Romans 6:19

nature is slave to lusts and desires that are anything but good. You love to do whatever you want whenever you want without a care for anyone else. This is what your flesh thinks is fun, and isn't that what life is all about anyway? Isn't the meaning of life to simply have fun and be happy all of the time? To celebrate and live life to the fullest at every opportunity, every waking moment?

Yet, underneath it all, whom are you trying to convince? What is it you are trying to hide? Even the world knows that death, with all its medical and technological advancements, is inevitable; the wages of sin is death. This means if you die, you will prove God's word to be true, that you are a sinner. The sinful nature hates to admit that God is right, and so it constantly looks for ways to make Him the fool. God told mankind not to eat from one tree out of all the trees on earth, and man knew better. God told man to spread abroad the whole earth; yet, man stopped at Babel to build a city and tower to make a name for himself. Man believes it knows more about marriage, and children, and morality, and sexuality, and right and wrong, and so what would God know about life? If man can find a way to defeat death, it can prove once and for all that God doesn't know what He is doing; that man truly is the most wise of all existing things.

You aren't the only one burdened, corrupted, and destroyed by sin, even the world around you is a mockingly-hollow shell of its former self; all of creation is thoroughly corrupted with sin. This is why you lock yourself away in your home, annoyed if it's too hot or too cold outside, bothered by the ants and afraid of the spiders that find their way in, suspicious and afraid of whatever the neighbor across the street is doing. You toil and labor, often with nothing to show for it. Some work for years, only to be let go without so much as a second thought. Some strive and struggle for years, providing for and loving your family, but you and your spouse seem as though you are drifting apart, your children seem to hate you, and others mock and jeer you. Satan attempts to drive you not only to false belief, but also to despair, and other great shame and vice. He floods your minds with thoughts of after your own death, you will be forgotten by all but a few.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, repent. Flee these ways and put away these thoughts of death. In spite of this – indeed because of it – Jesus has compassion. Jesus comes into this wild and evil desolate place to restore creation. He comes to right what is wrong. He comes to make it all, even you, “very good.” Having

compassion on the weary multitudes, Jesus comes renewing the bounty of Eden, freely granting an abundance of bread.

Note well when this happens, for there are no coincidences in the Holy Scriptures. This multitude has fasted – grown hungry, weak, and weary – but on the third day, creation is restored. They are satisfied and rejoice. They're given rest as their bellies are filled and their hearts made glad. This miracle – as do all of Jesus' miracles – points to His full restoration of creation in His Passion, death, and resurrection.

He comes in flesh of your flesh to take up your cause, to labor and toil under your sins. He bears them in the burden of the wood of the cross laid upon Him as His hands and feet are pierced through. He comes to sweat and to bleed for you. All your troubles and sins, all the corruption and curse of the earth, is placed upon Him. Jesus dies your death. There is no sin of yours left out, no sin of yours for which He does not suffer. All sin He takes upon Himself and pays the full wage. It is finished, completed—payment is done.

After three days, creation is restored as Life now reigns. For Jesus who was dead is alive again forevermore. Covered in His righteousness and innocence, Paradise is opened to you once more. Jesus put His hand to the task and it was not in vain. He looks and sees saints made holy and righteous in His own Blood – multitudes upon multitudes, from every tribe, language, and race—He sees even you.

What Jesus did then in feeding the 4,000, He does for you now, today, in a far greater and more wonderful way. You've not come to be fed with that which only leaves you hungry again. You have the Word of God, Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, and the Holy Communion. What you have is eternal and cannot be taken from you.

Indeed, Jesus gives you the Bread come down from Heaven, which never runs out, which feeds thousands upon thousands upon thousands as more yet remains. For as men were once undone by eating from a tree, so now Jesus gives Himself on a Tree to be the Fruit that undoes the curse, that ends captivity and prison, that restores life and immortality, that sets you free. You shall never hunger again.

He gives as He gave to the 4,000: freely, without any labor or merit on your part; but you receive the greater Gift. Jesus gives Himself, hidden in bread made by the sweat of men's brows, that men would be in fellowship once again with Him and His Father by the Spirit; simply out of His great love and compassion for you.

For His Flesh gives life to the sinful world. His Flesh and Blood bestows eternal life with the Father and the resurrection of the body. What is given you to eat and drink is exactly that which was offered up in death upon the holy Cross and raised again. You who sinned by eating are now called to eat and live.

The compassion of the Lord Jesus Christ is such that it drives Him to offer up His Body and pour out His Blood upon the holy Cross for your sake. It's a love that causes Him to wash you clean in His righteousness and innocence, placing His own Name upon you. He's compelled to sacrifice Himself upon the Cross in your place and to now feed you with His sacrificial; yet, living Body and Blood. Because He loves you, Jesus provides for your needs of both body and soul. His love for you cannot be contained.

So, you are set free. No longer a slave to sin, you are a slave to God. Set free by Jesus, you are pleasing to God. The new man in Holy Baptism delights in the Commandments, bears his neighbors' burdens and prays for him, serves his neighbor in love according to his vocation. This is true freedom – not earned or carried out under threat or compulsion; it's the fruit of Jesus.

At this point, it is important to reflect upon the verbs from Romans. The wages of sin is death – that's what you've earned and bring upon yourself. But the fruit of Jesus that is sanctification that leads to eternal life is what you get, what you receive. It comes from outside of you. For this eternal life you receive is not something you've earned of yourself, a due you've received, or payment for a job well-done; it is the free gift of God given you in Christ.

Sunday after Sunday, Jesus brings the whole company of heaven here to this altar, feeding His lambs with His own body and blood. He pours out His compassion on you. The week is long, and if He sends you away hungry to your home, you will faint on the streets of daily life. Here and now – in the place of desolation, of temptation, and of death – Jesus provides for you. He feeds you to end the curse. Your cup overflows and the baskets are full of leftovers.

Here is bread, symbol of your toil, corruption, and death; but Our Lord Jesus Christ has taken it, given thanks, broken it, and given it to His disciple to set before you. And what he sets before you is, in fact, the Bread of Life come down from Heaven. Jesus gives you a great Feast which can never be rivaled. He gives not by the sweat of your brow and toil, but by grace – for free and without effort. You are satisfied, never to hunger again.

“He never shall forsake His flock,
His chosen generation;
He is their refuge and their rock,
Their peace and their salvation.
As with a mother’s tender hand,
He leads His own, His chosen band:
To God all praise and glory!”⁴ Amen.

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

⁴ Sing Praise to God, the Highest Good LSB 819:4

**Prayer of the Church
Seventh Sunday after Trinity
18 July 2021**

Lord God, our King over all the earth, reigning over the nations, sitting on Your holy throne, graciously receive our prayers and praises. Subdue the devil, the world and our sinful flesh under the feet of Your people, that we may share in the victory that Christ has won for us. Bless and protect the work of pastors, congregations, and missionaries in this country and around the world, that all people would receive the bread of everlasting life given in the Word and Sacraments of Christ. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Creator and Preserver of all things, You govern and sustain the earth for our good and provide for all our needs of body and soul. Bless the labor of those who produce food and shelter, safety and peace, especially for those in need. Lead us to recognize Your gracious hand in all things and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord and Giver of life, You formed us from the dust of the earth and breathed into us Your own breath of life. All people are made in Your image and have dignity and worth in Your sight. Defend Your gift of earthly life at every age, from natural conception to natural death, and grant all mankind to live in peace. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Loving Father, we give thanks that in Holy Baptism we receive forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death and the devil, and eternal salvation, bless those who celebrate baptismal anniversaries this week, especially, *William*, grant that by Your Word and Spirit they may faithfully keep the covenant into which they have been called, boldly confess their Savior, and finally share with all Your saints the joys of eternal life; Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, You have promised to send Your holy angels to guard and keep Your children. We thank and praise You for the gift of life and for the protection and care you have provided as *Valerie, Danielle, & Troy* celebrate their birthdays. Grant that they may grow in grace, continue to know Your loving-kindness, abide in the confession of Your care and protection, serve You faithfully all the days of their life and finally come to the fullness of Your joys in heaven; Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Father of mercies and God of all comfort, our only help in time of need, look with favor upon Your servants *Carmen, Susan, Zoey, Donna, Floyd Doughty, Tricia Fredericks* and those we name in our hearts. Assure them of Your mercy, deliver them from the temptations of the evil one, and give them patience and comfort in their illness. If it please You, restore them to health, and give them grace to accept this tribulation with courage and hope; Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God and Lord, You have called us present ourselves to You as slaves to righteousness. As we gather in the Voter's Assembly this morning, grant us Your presence. Enlighten and guide us by Your Word that in all matters of deliberation we may always consider the best interests of Your Church and this congregation. Let Your Holy Spirit rule and direct our hearts that, in the spirit of Christian love, we may present and discuss matters and be kindly disposed toward one another, to the end that all we say and do may please You; Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of grace, as Your Son fed thousands in the wilderness by multiplying bread and fish, feed Your people gathered here today with the true bread from heaven, the body and blood of our Savior, Jesus Christ, that even in the wilderness of this world we may share in the eternal life of paradise. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

All these things and whatever else You know that we need, grant us, Father, for the sake of Him who died and rose again and now lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever. **Amen.**