

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The first Adam did not keep the fast - he ate of the fruit. But the last Adam, the God Man, kept the fast. He fasted perfectly for forty days and forty nights. And yet, in mercy, He ended the fast of the multitudes that followed Him on the third day. He broke their fast because of the weakness of their flesh, the flesh they received from the first Adam.

He through whom all things were created, He who daily feeds the world, knew well the pangs of hunger. He knew want and pain, sadness and suffering, disappointment and betrayal. And yet in love He took bread and blessed it. He broke it and gave it to His disciples to food the multitudes. By this He began to teach the disciples of their Office – to be servants of Christ, and stewards of the Mysteries of God.

The flock of Christ follows Him to feast on His Word. Faith does not worry about daily bread, for faith seeks first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Everything else is added to the faithful by grace. He gives them their meat in due season. He opens His hand, and satisfies the desires of every living thing. The faithful do not worry, saying “what shall we eat”, or “what shall we drink”, or “what shall we wear”. They feast on the bountiful provision of the Word of God. They fix their eyes on eternal things, trusting that God supplies the temporal and the eternal. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.

But perhaps you have thought to yourself “Well, that was easy for the disciples. It was easy for the 4000. Jesus was with them. They heard His voice. They saw His miracles.” But you can’t see Jesus. And the checkbook is almost empty, while the mailbox is always full - of bills. The gas gauge is on “E”, and payday is a week off. Perhaps your next check isn’t enough to cover the bills. The car is old, the house needs work, and the cupboard is bare.

Then devil rushes in. He desires to convince you that your hardships are proof that God doesn’t love you. “Where is your God when you need Him?”, the devil taunts. “If He really loved you he’d fill your tank.” Satan wants you to doubt God. He tries to tempt you to arrive at the conclusion that God won’t help you – that God has forsaken you – that you’ll just have to help yourself. Even worse is the belief that you have everything you need because God is more pleased with you than with others - that you have, by your works, earned God's favor. Do not be deceived. God gives daily bread even to the wicked. He causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. Material bounty is no evidence of God's favor. Shortage is no evidence of His wrath.

Yet, like Job’s wife and friends, the devil wants you to find fault with God, blame God, doubt God, and even curse God, for the tribulations that you face. For that is how the devil fills hell – through false doctrine – by tempting you to believe things about God that aren’t true. And the health, wealth, prosperity promises of the televangelist, and the self-improvement doctrine of so called “church growth”, and the worldly doctrine of self-actualization are among the devil’s favorite tools by which to deceive the multitudes.

Have temporal things distracted you from God? Has your hunger for the earthly supplanted your hunger for the heavenly? Have you doubted that He who multiplied the loaves and fish loves you enough that He will provide your daily bread? Have you asked with the disciples “From where can a man be satisfied with bread here in this wilderness? Have you thought “perhaps God has overlooked me?”

Repent. Put away fallen human reason. Put away false ideas about who God is and how He works. Turn off the televangelists. Listen to God. Trust in His Word. His Promises are sure. In mercy, He works through all things, even through, indeed, especially through hardship and suffering, for the good of your salvation. Do not put your faith in things that perish. Put your faith in God. He will never leave you nor forsake you. He will provide for you. He will deliver you.

God has not overlooked you. God died for you. Your sins, your personal sins, your doubt and anxiety, your uncertainty and worry, were laid upon Christ. He kept the fast. He had compassion on the multitudes. He had compassion on you. For you He endured the worst suffering the world has ever witnessed. He paid a debt He didn't owe, that your debt be cancelled. He graciously gave His life in exchange for yours. He died that your sins be forgiven. And then in the greatest miracle of all, He defeated death and rose to new life. All this He did that believing in Him, you might receive all the blessings of heaven.

There is no want in heaven. There is no doubt, no anxiety, no worry. There is no hunger, no financial need, no empty cupboards. These are the things of this fallen world. But that you might know Him, here God uses both lean and fat years to teach you that He is the giver of all good things. In mercy, in love, He gives daily bread even to those who reject Him.

But for you O Baptized, for you redeemed in Christ, He reserves miraculous Food. He gives you to eat of the Food which does not perish. He gives you to drink of the fount of Living Waters. Believing, you shall surely never thirst again. And you are called a holy people, the redeemed of the Lord, for now you are set free from sin. You have the gift of life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Today, the Christ that was with the multitudes is just as surely with you. You eat not the loaves and fish, as miraculous as they were. Today He feeds you the Meal that abounds with grace and forgiveness. He feeds you the same Body that multiplied the loaves and the fish. He places His saving gifts in the hand of the Pastor to distribute to you.

With plain bread and wine, blessed by His Word and according to His institution, He makes His Body and Blood your Food and Drink. He nourishes your soul unto life everlasting, that you be strong and not faint on the way through this desert world. He feeds you that you attain unto the resurrection of the body, and eternity with God, at the Feast of the Lamb and His Kingdom that has no end.

Mark 8:1-9

The Eighth Sunday after Pentecost, 2010 A. ✠ D.

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