

The Seventh Sunday after Trinity Sunday
Mark 8:1-9
July 30th, 2017
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church
Greenville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

I Have Compassion on the Multitude

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

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

What a remarkable statement that St. Mark the Evangelist makes in the Gospel for today! He says that the multitudes had followed our Lord + Jesus for three days. Now, they were in the wilderness far from any place to buy bread. This is how much they desired to hear the Word of God: they followed our Lord for three days, only desiring to hear what He had to say; they did not care about their bellies, but only about God's Word. As our Lord + Jesus said the tempter—the devil—man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. The multitudes were content to live by what proceeded from our Lord's lips. This is how starved they were for the pure teaching of the Word of God. They were willing to starve their bellies, in order to become satiated with the preaching of our Lord + Jesus.

Of course, this is due to one reason, they had great faith in the Lord + Jesus. It was their faith in our Lord that sustained them as they followed Him for three days. You have heard me speak about faith often. But, what is faith? Faith is believing that something is true when you have no evidence that it is true. Even greater faith is believing something to be true when all of the evidence is begging you to believe that it is not true. To the sinner who sees only his failed keeping of the commandments before him, it is a great faith to believe that those sins are forgiven. To the multitudes who followed our Lord + Jesus for three days, it is a great faith for them to believe that our Lord would provide for their bellies, when they had no reason to believe for Him to do so.

Even greater is this faith, when we hear in the Gospel that they had only seven loaves of bread and a few small fish to feed four thousand men; and this number did not include the women and children. How was so little going to feed so many? It may have been enough for the Lord and His disciples, but even then, they probably would not have received their fill. They would probably still be a little bit hungry. But, this is what faith does, it looks past the evidence. It trusts in the Lord and His providence. The Lord would feed their bellies, just as He fed their souls for three days.

Why? Because our Lord is compassionate. His compassion is for the multitudes. His compassion is expressed first in feeding their souls for three days. He satiates their starved souls with the Word of God. Then He has compassion on them by feeding their bellies with bread and fish. And, they ate until they were full. The Lord does not skimp in His compassion. He is abundant in His compassion and in His gifts. But, what is compassion? Compassion is to feel a deep sympathy for someone else. It means to understand someone's needs and provides them as best as that person

can. Our Lord's compassion for the multitudes is expressed by feeding them. They had the need of being satiated from their hunger and He feeds them until they are full. His compassion and mercy is abundant. He does not skimp in His gift giving.

This should serve to help in strengthening our faith. For, when all evidence seems to say that our Lord is not going to help us. We have His promises and His deeds. Or to say it another way, just like the crowds who had His Words and His actions, we too, have His Words from Holy Scripture and we have His actions recorded by the Evangelists. St. Mark the Evangelist is doing us a great service today, he is showing us our Lord's compassion for His people. We are His people. In the same way that He richly gives us His gifts so that we may have forgiveness, life and salvation, our Lord will provide us with all that we need to support this body and life. He will not leave us to go hungry. He will take care of us. He will show us compassion.

He knows our needs and will supply them. He gives us our daily bread. He gives all those things for which we ask in the Lord's Prayer: food, drink, clothes, shoes, house, yard, land, livestock, money, property, a pious spouse, pious children, pious servants, pious and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, discipline, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like. He also guards and protects from all harm and danger of both body and soul. Even more so, He gives us abundantly all the gifts we need for our soul: faith, hope, love, forgiveness, eternal life, salvation, gentleness, self-control, peace, patience—all the things that draw us closer to Him.

Our faith clings to Him and trusts in Him. But, our enemies are relentless. They are always there to steal our confidence. They want to remove all evidence of God's grace and mercy from our lives. They know the things that will shake our faith. If we are consumed with guilt over our sins, then they will continuously put our sins before our eyes. If we are worried about our daily bread, they will make it seem like our daily bread will dry up and we will be left hungry and thirsty. If we feel that our Lord is being silent to our cries and prayers, then our enemies will increase our worry and stress. Our enemies hate us. And they will use any means to shake or destroy our faith, because they do not want us to experience the compassion of our Lord.

They do not want us to feel the grace of our Lord. They do not want us to experience His mercy. They want us to be depressed, stressed out, filled with worry. They want us fearful, and sorrowful. They want to suck the joy out of every ounce of our life, so that we are completely miserable. Just like the Tempter tried to do with our Lord. Our Lord + Jesus refuted the devil simply with God's Word, man cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

For, it is the Word of God that drives back our enemies and their attacks. This is why we should use the multitudes from the Gospel reading as an example. When our enemies attack us, our souls become starved for the Word of God. The multitudes sought the food for their soul from our Lord + Jesus. They followed Him three days into the wilderness, unconcerned about their bellies. They knew, as we should learn daily, that one cannot be content with the earthly gifts that our Lord gives us, unless we are content with the spiritual gifts our Lord gives us.

And as I said before, the Lord is abundant in His giving and His compassion. He does not leave us at the mercy of our enemies, but He daily desires to preach His Word into our ears. Every day when we get up in the morning and make the sign of the holy cross we are reminded of our Holy Baptism. This reminder is a daily preaching of the grace of God, for we know that we have already faced the consequences of our sins, when in our Holy Baptism, all that was sinful within us was drowned, and our Old Adam was killed. The wages of sin have already been paid. We now have eternal life with our Lord + Jesus Christ. Whenever we make the sign of the holy cross, we are once again reminding ourselves of our Lord's compassion for us; that He has made us a new creation, and clothed us with His works and merits. He has fed our soul, by washing our bodies. Our sins are forgiven.

And when we realize that our Lord has taken care of our greatest need—salvation—we know that He will take care of all of our earthly needs. For it is a small thing for Him to grant us our daily bread. It is certainly a much smaller work to feed and clothe us, then it is to wash away all sin from us and grant us eternal life.

Our Lord desires to have compassion on us, just as He did the multitudes. He has sympathy for our needs, for He lived in our flesh. He knows our temptations and trials. He knows how our enemies attack us. Therefore, He gives us abundantly of His compassion by giving us His Word and Sacraments, which strengthen our faith in Him by retelling us all the times when He fulfilled His promises to His people. He will fulfill His promises for you. He will not leave you nor forsake you. He has your best interest at heart. He will feed you, clothe you, and daily cleanse you of our sins. For He has compassion on you and all the multitudes of His people. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.