

10th Sunday after Pentecost – Year B
Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY

August 9, 2009

John 6:1-15
Pastor Paul Horn

“Give us today our daily bread...”

Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), 2 and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. 3 Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. 4 The Jewish Passover Feast was near.

5 When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” 6 He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

7 Philip answered him, “Eight months’ wages a would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!”

8 Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up, 9 “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

10 Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. 11 Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

12 When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.” 13 So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

14 After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.” 15 Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

Give us today our daily bread... Have you ever stopped to think, “What am I praying when I utter those words?” First of all, “What is my daily bread?” Martin Luther in his small catechism wrote, “Daily bread includes everything that we need for our bodily welfare.” Not just food and drink, but all the things we has human beings need to survive, clothing and shelter. Our next question might be, “To whom does God give daily bread? Is this just for Christians?” Jesus said in Matthew 5:45, “He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.” Your Heavenly Father gives daily bread to all without their asking, even to all the wicked.

But what about the thousands who starve to death every year in Communist countries? What about the children of that single mother who was gunned down in the fitness gym? What about those folks in Glendale, who were counting on the new jobs at a new car battery factory, which will not be built? What about folks who have been laid off, whose hours are cut back, whose retirement funds are dependant on the stock market? Will God still provide for them? What about us, will he provide for us? It is my prayer that the Holy Spirit will answer these questions for us as we listen to this story from John's Gospel, chapter 6.

The gospel writer paints the picture for us. Jesus and his 12 disciples are stepping out of their boats, having just arrived from the opposite side of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus wishes to spend some quiet time with his disciples, perhaps to rest, pray or teach. But Jesus cannot go anywhere without drawing a crowd. The people find out. And so they come on foot, from as far away as 8 or 9 miles. But Jesus sees the small handful of crowds gathering so he withdraws with his disciples up on the mountain. And as the afternoon rolls on more and more folks trickle in, and finally a rather large crowd has gathered. John informs us that 5,000 men had gathered. Matthew adds that this was besides the women and children who were present. Jesus, looking up at the crowd, turns and says to Philip, "Where are we going to buy bread so that they can eat?"

Why did Jesus ask Philip this question? Vs6 tells us, "He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do." The Teacher wanted to prove his disciple. How would Philip respond to this situation? First of all, he does good arithmetic. It would take a small fortune to feed them, Jesus! 200 denarii to be exact... A denarius was equivalent to a days' wage. 200 days pay = 8 months of wages, that is a lot of money, and even then, Philip calculates, this would have been enough for them to have a little bit... not enough to fill them.

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, speaks up, "Here's a lad with some food, five loaves of bread," this bread was not Asiago cheese bread from Panera, but barley bread, what the poor people ate. The boy also had two fish (we could suppose that he had just caught them out of the Sea of Galilee). Andrew points out, "But how far can they go for so many people? This is impossible!"

Had they forgotten to whom they were talking? Had they not witnessed what Jesus had done in his ministry? He had healed a royal official's son, changed water into wine, cast out demons, raised a man's dead daughter, healed a bleeding woman, restored a man's shriveled hand. Was Jesus not able to do this? When Jesus asked, "How are we going to feed them," he was looking for this response from his disciples, "Oh Lord, you alone know!" However, the gospel writer Mark records their faithless response, "Send them away." They failed the test.

The purpose of Jesus' miracles was to attest to his divinity, to show his disciples that he was true God, so that they might put their trust and faith in him. The purpose of his miracles was to prove to the crowds that his Word was true, that his claim to be the

Messiah was true, that he had come into the world to bring them eternal, life-giving food. But they didn't get it...

There was a picture that hung in my late grandmother's kitchen. Maybe you have seen it before. It was a picture of an elderly man with white hair and beard, sitting at his kitchen table where lay his bread, knife, bowl and Bible. His hands are folded and his eyes closed. We can only guess what he's talking to his Heavenly Father about. It is my belief that I could insert your picture there, in place of that man, as an example of someone who prays at every mealtime. And when you don't, your little ones remind you, "Daddy, we forgot to pray!" They say this because you have reminded them why you pray at every meal; to thank Jesus for this food and ask him to bless it for good health. You've taught them that when we pray, "Give us today our daily bread," we are really asking our Father in Heaven to give us what we need for our bodies. And why is it that Jesus taught us to pray for just today? So that we do not fret about tomorrow's daily bread...

But we often do, don't we? We complain, "But we're living paycheck to paycheck!" Oftentimes it's our own fault, not God's, when we choose to squander our daily bread on material goods or by taking out loans or mortgage we can't afford. Sometimes it's our own fault. But have there been and could there be times when we count every penny, when we cancel the cable television, set aside frivolous purchases and going out to eat, and we're honestly worried about the empty pantry, the leaky roof, a sparse clothes closet and late mortgage or rent payments? Oh, it would be so easy for us to be like Andrew and cry out, "This is impossible! How far can this meager income go?" It would be so easy for us to be like Philip and say, "The math doesn't add up. How are we going to put bread on the table?" When finances are tight, when the daily bread – the clothes, food and shelter are at stake, we so often forget to get down on our knees and pray, "Give us today our daily bread."

Our Gracious Father in Heaven has promised that he will supply us with everything we need for our bodies. My dear friends, join me this morning in praying, "Father, forgive us for taking our daily bread for granted! Forgive us for faithless worrying. Help us to trust in you! Forgive us for not fixing our eyes on your Son Jesus through whom you provide all that we need!"

Your Heavenly Father gives you every reason to trust in his promise, every reason to believe that when you pray, "Give us today our daily bread," that he will most certainly grant that request. The apostle Paul in Romans 8:32 writes, "God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" Our Father ought not to have spared us from his wrath, we who sin through faithless worry, pessimistic attitudes and failing to trust in him alone for our daily bread, he ought to have given us up to death as we deserve. Just as he did with the angels when they sinned – he sent them to hell; just as he did with the ancient world, he did not spare them but brought the flood to destroy them. (2Peter 2:4,5) But your Father has not dealt with you and me in this manner. Instead, he gave up the one thing that was most precious to Him; His one and only Son. The Father did not release his Son from the punishment

of his wrath over our sins. The Father did not spare His Son from the death we earned by our sins. Christ Jesus was given up for us all so that we would not have to perish for our sins.

Your gracious Father in heaven has done all this for you: he's taken care of your biggest need - pardon from your sins, saved you from death, put you in a right relationship with God so that you have the sure hope of heaven. If he took care of the life to come, which is everlasting, will he not also give you what you need for this life which is only temporary? Yes! And the Father provides so much more than we need!

So why is it that some go without food or clothing or shelter? Sometimes it is their own fault. Other times Satan attempts to deprive God's creatures of all that they receive from God through bad government, corrupt and greedy politicians. Satan is sorry if anyone has a morsel of bread from God and eats it in peace. But we thank our God that we do have good government which keeps the peace so that we do not have to fight or struggle for our daily bread. We thank our Father in heaven for causing the grain and wheat to grow so that we have more than enough food in our supermarkets. Children, thank God for your parents or grandparents who provide you with clothes, a home and food. Employees, thank God for your job and the skills he has blessed you with so that you might earn your daily bread. Thank God for your daily bread. Ask him to give you your daily bread, just for today, so that you might not worry about tomorrow and so that you might trust in him. For he has promised you...

"Look at the birds of the air and the flowers of the field. They do not worry about what they will wear or eat. And what are they worth? Not much at all. Yet your heavenly Father feeds and clothes them. How much are you worth? You are priceless in his sight because his Son died for you. Will he not much more clothe and feed you?" (Matthew 6:25-34) Jesus shows us he has the power to take care of our bodies through this story. He was gracious enough to take the time to feed over 5,000, he will certainly do the same for you.

Trust your Father in heaven to be your Preserver, as he promised. No Christian who trusts in Him need fear the shortcomings of this earthly life, need not fear hunger, thirst, nakedness, or any kind of want. Your Father is able to provide all you need and he does. At times his believers are in want and do not know how to help themselves, yet Christ will see that the want is fulfilled.

He promised us his Son, and he kept it. He promises us our daily bread. We will pray for it and receive it with thanksgiving. To God alone be the glory! Amen.

a Greek two hundred denarii