

One overarching point of our Lord's teaching, brought up again and again in the Gospels, is that none of us needs to worry and fret about the things of the body, anything to do with this body and life. Even when thousands are in the wilderness without anything more than a few loaves of bread and some small fish, that is no obstacle to the Lord's ability to provide for them. It's not only easy, He is moved to do this out of His compassion for them.

He does this for the Jews of Galilee, feeding 5,000 of those who knew His Word, who had some knowledge and confidence in the God of Israel. He does it here even for Gentiles, foreigners, those whom the sons of Israel would easily have thought of as evil people. He gives daily bread to them as well.

He had already taught concerning His Father's loving attention and care to the support and needs of the body, pointing out that His care extends even to birds of very little brain and no farming know-how, extends to mindless flowers that are perky and beautiful today, and tomorrow are wilted, cut, and cast into the compost bin.

He teaches this because this is the same God and Lord who made all things, and generously gave humanity the care and custody of the earth, even to eat of all that the Lord God had made. So don't worry about that, you don't need to! He has shown you time and time again, in the Scriptures, in your own life as you look back and see His providing hand, especially in times of short, want, and lack.

You don't need to be anxious, or wonder if God is going to take care of your bodily needs, provide for your life in this world. He is going to do that whether you are a believer or not. So do not stoop so low as the pagans. Do not be content with remaining on the level of the godless, who do not know this promise, and worry, and fret, and obsess.

What you need to be attentive to, what your concerns and care are now free to turn to and consider since you have that base set of worries taken away, is having what not all people have the guarantee of: salvation, having Christ Jesus as the sole source of our consolation.

St. Paul points out in today's epistle, that there are those who live as slaves to impurity and lawlessness, and the fruit of that life, of spiritual famine or junk-food, is death. We heard last week, what I hope you have considered with a little more focused attention this past week, lingering presence of sin in our lives, that we quite easily get comfortable with, that we tolerate, thinking we have tamed it, can keep it over here in the corner, in its cage, and take out and play with it when we are ready, and then put it away till next time, no trouble, no problems, you've got it under control, it's no big deal.

No! Its poison will take hold of you, like heavy metals slowly accumulating in the body over time, wreaking its deadly, destructive curse. As we will hear after this sermon, the nature of sin seems so beautiful from the outside, whether it's temptation to satisfying some appetite of the flesh, it just feels too good to give up, to forego that desire. Or just giving in to the ease of worrying about things God has promised to give and do, aren't we called to be prudent, after all?

It consumes you. Lust, gluttony, worry, anxiety, dig their claws in and hold you fast in grief and chagrin, feeling affliction. You must see the real sin in you from God's Word. This is what the Ten

Commandments teach us, this is why every Christian must know them, meditate upon them. And hear St. Paul's words, the teaching carried into our ears by Bach's music. It is real. The sin in you, that you treat as a pet, brings the fruits of death, in time and eternity. This is the big danger. Not fainting on the way, not being hungry, not having pleasure for your body whenever you want it, not germs or getting sick. It is sin. It will kill you forever. Know it. Confess it. Fear what it can do to you.

Because it is only then that you can see Christ Jesus for what He has come to give with a richness that far exceeds seven baskets of leftovers after 4,000 eat their fill. He brings a wealth that makes Jeff Bezos, Warren Buffett, Bill Gates, as paupers. Whatever they have and how much of it, at the least will vanish and be of no use when they draw their last breath. The bread Jesus gave in Galilee and here in the Decapolis, it sustained for a day, and then passed through and out.

Jesus says in John chapter 6 that the bread that gives life to the world, that if anyone eats of it, that person will not die but will be raised up to eternal life, that bread is Himself. It is Jesus. He is the Giver of what you need that you do not possess in yourself, that you cannot get for yourself, that you have no guarantee of simply because you are a human being. You need Him, what He gives, and where He gives it.

The crowd in today's Gospel shows us how to be. Simply be with Jesus, go where He is, and listen, hear His life-giving Word. Don't sweat the small stuff. He shows you today that you don't need to worry about that. But as with the 5,000, there are those who hear Him, but do not listen, do not believe. After Jesus' beautiful sermon about the true bread, given to give life to the world, it is only the 12 who remain. It is only 12 out of that massive crowd who recognize their need for Jesus' word.

You need to know your sin. The Ten Commandments teach us what each of our sins are. If you are confused about that, if you have guilt or shame and you don't know why, or you wonder why your life does not seem to be as it should be, or you know you are not living as you ought but don't know where to start to make it better, this is why you have a pastor. Come and seek the guidance and understanding that is given in God's Word. It might be you are being tormented with guilt for something that isn't even a sin! Or rather than your excuses and poor attempts to self-medicate, you can hear God's clear Word, yes, that's a sin. Stop your excuses, stop your delusion that you can ignore or manage it. Repent.

And even more, when you know your sins, when you are weary of them, tired of the fight, fearful that Christ Jesus has washed His hands of you, written you off as hopeless, when your conscience is weighed down and you feel and fear the devil's clutches, and you just want to know how to fight back, how to make sin march off immediately, the answer is only in your compassionate Lord. Who even more than wanting to ensure you don't faint on the way for lack of food, drink, or any other bodily need, He has come to save you, to cover your sins in His blood, and give you the true, living bread from heaven.

That is the free gift of God. He sets free not just from hunger and thirst, but from sin, guilt, and shame. And if you think your sins are too big for Him to do that. Hear what He tells you in His Supper. He gives you the very body that bore your sins, and has you eat it. He gives you the same blood He shed on the cross to turn away God's anger for your sins, and He tells you to drink it. You are directly connected to the solution, to the only thing that can provide for this need, and it is freely given. And if you need this truth spoken directly to you, Christ's blood-bought absolution cast over your sins, this is why you have a pastor, to hear, to see every bruise and cut, and apply the balm of Christ's forgiveness to it, to bind it up with prayer for God's aid and help. And then, pretty much invariably, he will bid you come soon to the Feast, where Christ Jesus gives what is most needed to those who need it most.