

## ACELC Free Conference

Lincoln, Nebraska

Matins, 2/9/2012

Exodus 16.1-35; Romans 16.17-27.

The manna in the wilderness is a type of Jesus. At least that's the way Jesus reads it. The day after Jesus had worked a great sign—having fed five thousand men, besides women and children—the people set off across the inland sea to find him. They were looking for a bread king. When they found him, they baited him: “What sign do you do, that we may see and believe? What work do you do? Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness, as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” Jesus responds,

Truly, truly I am saying to you: It was not Moses who gave to you the bread from heaven; but my Father gives to you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

From this revelation proceeds a discussion of the flesh and blood of Jesus being true food and drink unto eternal life—which sermon results in all but the twelve departing. “Do you want to go away as well?” “Lord, to whom shall we go,” &c. Those who turned back and no longer followed Jesus did so because they had wanted to own Jesus on their own terms. But he would not have that.

As it was with the thing itself—that is, Jesus—so also with the type, which is the manna. When the people want to have it on their own terms, it doesn't work out so well. Some rose early on the Sabbath day to go out into the field and collect the manna, in blatant disregard for the mandate of the LORD; but they found that there was no manna, according to all the LORD had said through Moses. Others collected more than they needed on that first day, because they did not trust the LORD to provide their daily bread in a daily manner. It moldered and stank and bred worms.

And when they rejected the manna, things got even more interesting! When Moses struck the rock twice that it yield its water, God's anger was kindled precisely because he messed up the type of Christ, who was sacrificed precisely once to make atonement for sins (indeed his striking it twice may prefigure the abomination of the Roman sacrifice of the mass). So also when the people rejected the manna, because by rejecting the manna, which is a type, they were rejecting the thing itself, which is Christ. You remember the scene: They grumbled [again] in the wilderness, against Moses and against the LORD, saying, “What were you thinking, to lead us out to this desolate place—do you want to kill us? There is no bread to eat! And we hate this worthless bread!” They reject the manna, and so they reject Christ. How *apropos* that their self-inflicted punishment is death by the fiery serpent himself! —unless they will repent, and look up to the serpent-Jesus, who became sin for us—and thus render the serpent's bite harmless!

So—what has this to do with the Lord's Supper? As we believe, teach and confess, the Lord's Supper is pure Christ for us. And he comes to us on his own terms, not ours. As it was sin not only

to reject the manna altogether, but also to presume to have it their own way, when and where they thought best—so it is a sin not only to reject Jesus, but to seek to have him our own way. And what is predicated of Jesus is by definition predicated of his most holy and precious body and blood. In other words, the Lord’s Supper is the LORD’s Supper, and not ours, that we might do with it whatever we please.

Therefore we are bound to the *verba*—Anything Paul wrote that is helpful (e.g., 1Co. 11) flows from the institution of Jesus, as Paul also confesses when he says, “I received from the Lord what I also handed over to you: That the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed,” &c., that is to say, it’s the *verba* that drives Paul’s comprehension of the Supper. Paul will not innovate a doctrine of the Supper—the words of Jesus are everything. It ought to strike us, then, that every kind of aberration in the doctrine and practice of the Supper comes from great hubris. Such hubris has an immense price (e.g., the Israelites, when they rejected the manna; and also the Jews who sought to raise up Jesus as their bread king, but finally could believe neither Jesus nor his signs—in every case, the people died as a penalty for their great arrogance). Where hubris and arrogance usurp the Lord’s Supper, divisions must *necessarily* be created. Which brings us to our epistle reading, which is an interrupted stream of reciprocal greetings:

Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well-known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me...Greet the beloved Persus, who has worked hard in the Lord...

But then: There are those to whom no greeting at all is to be offered:

I beg you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and scandals contrary to the teaching which you have learned. Avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naïve.

“Smooth talk”—that’s *χρηστολογία*, not *χριστολογία*—that is, not words concerning Christ, but fine-sounding words, smooth words—there’s an awful lot of smooth talk and self-flattery in the Church of our day, is there not? Much could be said about this, but let us make just one observation this morning: It is those who depart from correct [Christological] doctrine and practice who create division, not those who seek to restore them. With respect to various things (including the Supper) our synod is already divided. Again—only great hubris can tolerate the suggestion that we are really united, so that a group of congregations calling the synod to repentance in these matters can be labeled “divisive.”

The question we need to ask isn’t academic or theoretical, as though we were wondering along what trajectory things might proceed were we ever to be divided in the doctrine and practice of the Supper. This is our present reality. And it’s not as though you can get away from it—we are in fellowship with those who would have Jesus in the Supper on their own terms. We are therefore complicit in their blasphemies. The question that must be asked is this: What are you going to do about it? Because it’s not going to suffice that you are faithful in your place, but unconcerned about

the divisions and scandalous practice which trouble our fellowship. Because what happens at my altar happens at your altar, for we have one Lord, one confession, and one altar, you and me.

Some have said that this is not the time for us to raise these issues. Perhaps this is *not* the best time. But, pray tell, when will be the right time? Truly, truly I say to you, the time is coming, and even now is, when confessional men and women of conscience are leaving this fellowship precisely because of conscience in these matters of doctrine and practice within our fellowship. Will the right time be when they are gone, and their orthodox voices are no longer heard among us?

God save us if we cannot see that the time for action is now, and that the time we do have is well nigh spent! For the sake of the Church not only of our parents and our grandparents, but indeed the Church of our children and our children's children, we must obey God rather than men, and restore right doctrine and practice to this fellowship by the patient (but persistent—even *insistent*) teaching of Jesus, who comes to us on his own terms. He may yet forgive this Missouri Synod, if she will with tears turn back to Jesus, that he heal the divisions among us and restore us to orthodoxy and orthopraxy. May he give us courage to do all that, by his grace, is in our hearts to do. +INJ+ Amen.

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