

Sermon for Trinity 7 – Mark 8:1-9

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“Jesus said, ‘I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now 3 days and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way.’” The eyes of the Lord Jesus gaze right down into the hearts of the hungry, helpless, and tired people who have followed Him. He will satisfy them with bread and comfort for their souls. He will make provisions for their temporal and eternal care. But He is also concerned for our temporal bodies, for they will be resurrected for eternity with Him.

We live in the world where our lives and our work are measured, quantified, and qualified. Working people know this. Our work is observed and examined to see if it is free from errors and mistakes. Our production and output are monitored and compared. In the best cases, we’re compensated accordingly. Figures and statistics can bring accolades or disgrace; they can build us up or bring us down. Even our work inside the home reveals what seems to be an endless amount of dishes, laundry, garbage bags.

And children and young people, don’t forget that you will know again quite well the fact of life’s quantification. It’s August. In just 10 or 11 days from today, you’ll be back in school with projects, papers, tests, and grades. Your work, too, will be measured. Not to mention the added social pressures of having the right clothes and the right friends. No matter our vocation: father, mother, son, daughter, or worker, we are drained in a world that takes and takes and takes and gives little in return. Our time, resources, effort, energy, and yes, our very lives, evaporate in this desolate place called the world.

“And [Jesus’] disciples answered Him, ‘How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?’ And He asked them, ‘How many loaves do you have?’ They said, “Seven.” Look at the situation in which Jesus and His disciples found themselves: 4,000+ people and all they had to offer them was 7 loaves of bread and a few small fish! Let’s do some calculating: 7 loaves of bread and a few small fish would likely feed 40 people, 50 tops. What percentage of 4,000 people (which, we know the number was greater than this with women and children) would 50 be? Less than 1.25% of the people gathered that day, who had followed Jesus for 3 days, would be fed. That’s according to the number of people and the food that was set before them. 1.25% out of 100% is not a good result; it’d flunk or fire all of us.

But that’s where the miracle comes in: “... And [Jesus] took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, He broke them and gave them to His disciples to set before the people; and they set them before the crowd.” The Lord blesses the bread, multiplies it, and provides for thousands, in fact, more than 4,000 we’re told. “And they ate and were satisfied. And they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full.” There was the same amount of baskets of bread leftover as there was of loaves of bread to start with in the first place!

Like the other miracles recorded in the Gospel of Mark and the rest of the Gospels, this event is historical and legit. We have no reason to doubt the details of this miracle or any Word of God, for that matter. And like all the Scriptures, it’s more than just history: this miracle also extends into our lives today as well.

“How can one feed these people here in this desolate place?” Throughout the Bible the numbers 10, 100, and 1,000 represent fullness, entirety, and completeness. The same can be said of the number 4, as in the 4 corners of the earth—the whole world. When you multiply 4 X 1,000 you get 4,000, representative of the total and complete number of all people in the world. And what does Christ provide for them? 7 loaves and 7 baskets full of leftover bread. In the Scriptures, 7 is also a number of completeness, especially relating to God’s Work. The common example is God creating the entire world and resting on the 7th day.

God still gives 7 to His 4,000. Which means that God gives daily bread to the whole creation. God is still sustaining all things by His wisdom and power. “He ... gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does only out of fatherly divine goodness and mercy without any merit or worthiness in me.” He gives you, not a percentage, but ALL you need to support this body and life. He defends you against ALL danger and evil. As King David said in Psalm 37, “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.” When Christ provides for you, there will always be an abundance of everything, even where there is nothing.

Yet not only does God provide for your temporal life, but for your eternal life as well. You are numbered among God’s elect. You receive His bread of life and that in its entirety! Jesus said, “I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now 3 days and have nothing to eat.” After 3 days, Christ filled this multitude of followers with bread. Jesus later also told His disciples, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock Him and spit on Him, and flog Him and kill Him. And after 3 days He will rise.” For 3 days, His disciples mourned, sorrowed, and hungered for Him. After 3 days, Christ was raised from the dead and gave the Good news of life and resurrection to all His disciples!

But, we also have our “3 days” of toiling, sorrow, and hunger for the Lord. Yet, much like Jesus’ followers, we receive miraculous bread after “3 days.” That’s why every Sunday is our perpetual celebration of our Lord’s Resurrection. His Bread of Life is the reason for that celebration. He feeds us this day, even in this desolate world, the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. What’s more, “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven ... So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.” At the entire end of our “3 days,” Christ will welcome us into the Resurrection that is His, made ours by the merits of His suffering and death. For where there is forgiveness of sins there is also life and salvation for you.

As we see from the feeding of the 4,000, there is no partial or percentage with Christ: you are completely forgiven. You will live eternally because Christ holds no good thing back from you. Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen. ✂BJF✂