

August 6, 2017
Sermon for the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Matthew 14:13-21

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Matthew 14:13–21 (ESV)

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

¹³ Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴ When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. ¹⁵ Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” ¹⁶ But Jesus said, “**They need not go away; you give them something to eat.**” ¹⁷ They said to him, “We have only five loaves here and two fish.” ¹⁸ And he said, “**Bring them here to me.**” ¹⁹ Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ²⁰ And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. ²¹ And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Sometimes an appetizer can be a whole meal. But can a meal be an appetizer? Now 35 years ago I would have said yes. When I was in High School, I would get off of work at Wilbert's Exxon around 5:30, stop at Dub's Sweet Shop, eat two cheese burgers and a large order of onion rings and then come home just in time for supper.

It was a meal that was an appetizer. Now keep in mind, I was also playing football and being a teenager so I burnt it all off almost as soon as I ate it. But not anymore.

Now sometimes an appetizer ends up being my whole meal. And that's not always a good thing because I might miss out on something very good for me.

In our Gospel this morning, is an account that is very familiar to most of us, Jesus provides a meal that leaves five thousand men, plus women and children, more than satisfied.

As filling as it was, though, we'll be mistaken if we don't realize that this meal was still just an appetizer.

Page One: Trouble in the Text

As we identify trouble, or law, for the original hearers of this Text, we realize that initially this all looks good. Everyone seems to be "fat and happy". They ate and were filled with leftovers to spare. The trouble comes in with the thoughts and

attitudes of the disciples but also in the minds of the people that enjoyed the meal.

Moreover, the law is present in that there are problems because the world has been ruined by the fall into sin (vv 13–15).

Our text starts just after the evil that resulted in John the Baptist's horrible death. John had made the "mistake" of telling the king of his sin in having a relationship with Herodias, his brother's wife. Herodias then had her daughter trick the king into executing John.

After Jesus hear of this, He withdrew to a "desolate place" to mourn and to rest. Of course, the crowds followed, which interrupted the rest and aggravated the disciples.

Sin continues with the fatigue of the disciples, and likely the sorrow involved because they knew of John too and it was like one of their own had been wrongly killed.

So this all comes together. Sorrow, fatigue and houseguests that would not go home and finally, there's the obvious effect of sin that is shortages, deficiencies—in this case, insufficient food for a crowd of people at a particular place and time .

Jesus' friends and maybe even the crowds would have liked for Jesus to deal with these problems, these effects of sin, by a mighty show of His divine power.

But in the state of humiliation, Jesus didn't always use His divine power, except as it applied to His work of the salvation of sinners. He had compassion

on the crowds which is why He was moved healed to heal them. Because if His compassion, Jesus could do no less.

If Jesus were just doing a miracle to show His power, it would have been more impressive if He had instead raised John from the dead and struck Herod in some fitting manner! But Jesus whole reason in humbling Himself to be born was to save the whole world.

Raising John and smiting Herod might have impressed the disciples and the crowd, but it would not have shown Jesus to be the Messiah. Power for power's sake was not God's plan.

So why did Jesus bother with using His divine powers to deal with the shortage of food? This was a part of showing the world that He truly was, and is, the Son of God. This act of power carried obvious parallels to miraculous Old Testament feedings such as the manna during the exodus and the time Elisha fed 100 men with 12 barley loaves. (Ex 16:13–15; 2 Kings 4:42–44).

Even with these evidences, that they would surely have known, most of the crowd didn't understand and didn't make the connection between the promise of a Messiah and the fulfillment of that promise in Jesus.

The disciples didn't understand either. They would have been more than satisfied to consider what Jesus was about to do the whole meal, rather than just an appetizer. They enjoyed the meal here and now but really didn't consider anything past their full bellies. In the fall of mankind into sin, innocence wasn't the only thing lost. The natural knowledge of God and His Messiah was clouded as well. They lost track of what their Savior actually came to save them from.

There is trouble in our world

While many things have changed from the time that Jesus fed the 5,000 to now, the effects of the fall of man and living in a world that has been ruined by sin are still exactly the same.

We live in a world where we hear of tragic, senseless, and violent death all the time. Sometimes we become numb to the evil and suffering in the world because it is in our face all the time. The nightly news very seldom has any good news, it's all negative.

In addition, we daily face physical and spiritual fatigue, which makes us want to retreat into the wilderness.

We get overwhelmed and we wonder why God doesn't use His divine power to strike down all the evil people... but we don't stop to think that we would be among those struck first! We're so busy comparing our sins to our neighbor's that we begin to think our sins don't count because they aren't near as bad as someone else's.

We don't understand the state of humiliation or the theology of the cross. We end up being just like those that ate Jesus' bread and fish and rather than being thankful, we just begin to wonder what He will do for us next.

We don't like to hear about our sins and what they cost Jesus, tell us about the bad stuff our neighbors do so we can feel better about ourselves. We caused Jesus to go to humiliate Himself on the cross, we caused it, no matter how self righteous we might be, we can't escape that face.

Our understanding of God's plan for our salvation is clouded. Though we criticize other preachers for promoting it, a theology of glory is what our old natures long for too: "Give us free food and a sign, and then we'll believe!"

"All I need is a miracle."

But that's seeing, not believing. That's settling for a mere appetizer. We can only see the top level. Scratch the surface and there is so much more included. On the way back from our vacation we stopped at a small town bakery in Bellville and bought two pies. I knew Cyndi was getting the pies but I didn't see the transaction because I was doing something else. When we arrived at Cyndi's parents house and I began to unload there were two white cardboard boxes in the back of the car. Nothing on the box made it obvious what was inside, but scratch the surface...lift the lid...and there were two delicious pies. If I wouldn't have known they were there, all I would have seen was a cardboard box. Nothing good there, just a white box.

The same thing in God's kingdom happens as we see in Matthew 14. The people got their food, their stomachs were full and were happy. They scratched the surface and were satisfied. As a result, we often see the same thing happening that happened shortly after this miracle: many stopped following Jesus. The free food stopped and the followers lost interest. Now this in no way means that we do not feed or help those in need, but it does mean that we need to feed much more than just bread. Moses reminded the Israelites of this after the Exodus and Jesus quoted the same truth to the devil as He was being tempted.

“...*“It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ”* (Matthew 4:4), (Deuteronomy 8:3, ESV)

Page Three: Grace in the Text

And yet, even as the people continued to fall into sin in our Text, there is still grace in the Text. Jesus shared the sorrow of the people by mourning John’s violent death. And even though the crowds intruded on His mourning, Jesus saw the crowd and had compassion (v 14). He was deeply moved (Mk 6:34), and when the Lord is deeply moved, He acts ... and does miraculous things.

God’s grace in Christ is shown in the short-term “appetizer” miracle was the abundance of food fed to the 5,000(vv 15b–21). That’s all well and good but a full stomach doesn’t last all that long and soon you’re looking for more. The same thing can happen if you base your faith on emotion and how you feel rather than on the purity of God’s Word in the Gospel.

However, the long-term miracle in the Text would be the cross. Jesus would withdraw to the cross, and that was a place where nobody could follow Him. No crowds, not even any disciples. Most shouted from a distance, “Crucify Him”! But some followed. They got close, but they couldn’t follow onto the cross. Only the true Messiah could complete that trip.

So the result was far from raising John from the dead and striking King Herod down for his sin.

Jesus gave more and more information about how He would fulfill all that was written about the Savior. Jesus would suffer, die, and rise from the dead.

Not only would He satisfy the hunger and the other needs of the crowd—a great meal, yes, but still an appetizer for what was to follow.

Jesus would also pay for Herod's sin and overcome John's death and so much more, because it was multiplied exponentially to pay for the sins of the whole world, past, present and future as Jesus overcame death itself, for all mankind!

Jesus' multiplying a meal from five loaves and two fish points ahead to His compassion to be shown in even greater measure on the cross.

Which brings us to His grace shown in our world today!

Since we looked and found common ground between us and the people of our Gospel Text, it would stand to reason that the blessings of the Gospel are the same for us too.

If we can put ourselves in the crowd with respect to the problems, we can surely also put ourselves in the crowd with respect to the miracle. Because as Matthew 14 spoke to the people of old, so too it speaks to us today. (Heb. 1:1-2)

If the mirror of the Law shows us to be ones who want to see a miracle before we will be convinced, if we hunger for bread more than we hunger for righteousness, and if we fail to understand and even take offense at the cross; if we've been willing to settle for appetizers rather than the full meal, my friends do not despair... there's good news for all of us.

We are forgiven! YOU are forgiven.

You see, the big miracle—the real meal—is the compassion Jesus has for all people.

That is what led Him away from the crowds and to the cross. He didn't abandon the people and He will never abandon you. He went to the cross to save all mankind! And He didn't leave us alone. He left the Holy Spirit to enable us to believe! The Holy Spirit convinces us of the truth of God's Word for us.

We are fully satisfied, and God's grace overflows to us.
Back then, Jesus looked up to heaven, said a blessing, and did a miracle so people could live for a time.

Magnificent! Amazing! But just an appetizer.
Now Jesus looked down from the cross and said " *tetelestai*" It is finished! Jesus finished all that was needed for our salvation.

This blessing is not an appetizer but a full meal that lasts and blesses us into eternity!

Amen.

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

Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria