

**Sermon, Trinity 7, August 4,2019**  
**Gospel, St. Mark 8: 1-9**

*“And He took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people” (Mark 8: 6, ESV)*



*“God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.”  
(Small Catechism, The Lord’s Prayer, The Fourth Petition, CPH, 1986)*

In our sermon text from the Gospel of Saint Mark, and in the explanation of the fourth petition of the Lord’s Prayer from the Small Catechism which I just read, we see that God’s children should give thanks for His providence, for all that He provides us to support our bodies and lives, as Martin Luther describes God’s ongoing gifts to His creation. God provides the sunlight and the air and the light and the soil and the seed for vegetation. Without His original and continuing support, not one plant would grow in the field, not one drop of rain would fall, not one breath of air would exist. God cares for His creatures, big and small. He gives daily bread to all, even evil people. But we forget this, and we worry and fret about the future, whether we will have enough daily bread.

So Scripture gives us proof that God provides for His people. God called the experienced fisherman, Simon Peter, to take his boat out to the deep part of the sea of Galilee and let his nets down. Simon told the Lord that he and his partners had fished all night and had come up with nothing, but they would do as Jesus said. And when they let down their nets, the fish filled them so full that Simon had to call another boat to take them in. Even then, the weight of the fish threatened to sink the boats. Jesus was showing Simon and James and John--soon to be called to follow Him as disciples and apostles--that they need not worry about what they would eat tomorrow or the next day. He would provide. More than just enough, but abundantly, exorbitantly.

In the Gospel of John, we are told that first miracle Jesus performed was changing water into wine at the wedding in Cana, so that the wedding guests would be able to continue celebrating with the newlyweds. They need not worry about running out of wine. Through the power of God--Jesus’ power--six stone jars holding about 20 to thirty gallons each--120 to 180 gallons total, were now filled with the finest wine. God would provide. More than just enough: abundantly, exorbitantly.

And in the Gospel of Saint Mark, from which our Gospel text is taken, earlier, in chapter 6, we have the recounting of Jesus feeding a crowd of five thousand men, probably more than 10 thousand altogether, counting the women and children. Jesus takes five loaves, and two fish, says a blessing and gives the food to the crowd. Miraculously the loaves and fish multiply and feed the crowd, satisfy it. There were even twelve baskets of leftovers. He would provide. More than just enough: abundantly, exorbitantly.

We have another example in the feeding of the four thousand, from which the sermon text has been taken. Many people, mostly Gentiles, (for Jesus and the apostles were in Gentile territory), had come to see Jesus from long distances, most of them on foot. They brought their sick, blind, mute, and lame with them and they laid them at Jesus' feet to be healed, as Saint Matthew's Gospel informs us. (Matthew 15:29-31). Jesus did heal them, and he undoubtedly preached to them the Gospel of repentance and forgiveness of sins in Himself. The large crowd stayed with Jesus for three days in the wilderness, a sparsely inhabited region with scarce food. Jesus knew they must be hungry. He felt compassion on the crowd, for He too, as a man, knew hunger. He told His disciples that he was concerned that some people might faint from hunger on the way back to their homes. The disciples ask, "How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?" (Mark 8: 4, ESV). They were slow learners, evidently, like us, but Jesus does not dismiss them for their slowness to learn. He continues patiently to teach them, as He continues patiently to teach us in His Church, today, teaching us the same stories and doctrine over and over so that it becomes part of us. Jesus does not get angry. He simply asks the disciples how many loaves they have, so that they and all hearers of this miraculous story would be mindful of the scope of the miracle about to happen. The disciples have just seven loaves and a few small fish, barely enough to feed themselves and Jesus.

But Jesus takes the loaves and gives thanks to God. Then He breaks the loaves and gives them to the disciples to distribute. He blesses the fish and has the disciples set these before the people. All the crowd is fed and filled. This is no light snack, but a full meal, sufficient to satisfy thousands of very hungry people. This time there are seven baskets left over. And they were large baskets, which could hold up to fifty loaves of bread. So there are approximately 300 loaves worth of fragments left over. God provides. More than just enough, but abundantly, exorbitantly.

There are so many other stories of God's feeding people in the Bible. We heard the first in our Old Testament reading today from the book of Genesis. There, God provides a garden for Adam and Eve, with abundant food, even the tree of life with its fruit. In the story of Noah, God restores vegetation to the earth after the flood, so that Noah and his family, and all the animals aboard the ark can eat and live. In the wilderness of Sinai God provides daily food--manna- for the children of Israel wandering in the desert, as well as quail and water, and shoes and clothing that would not wear out. We have the story of Ruth and Naomi who live from the gleanings from the field of Boaz, a godly man, obeying God's law to share the harvest with the poor. We have the story of Elijah who asks the last morsels food from a poor widow and her son, promising that God will provide them with oil and flour for as long as they need it. And God does that, as He promised. God provides. He provides more than just enough, but abundantly, exorbitantly.

Jesus exhorts His disciples, and you and me, with these words from the sixth chapter of Saint Matthew:

“So I tell you, don’t worry about what you’ll eat or drink to keep alive or what you’ll wear on your bodies. (Matthew 6: 25, AAT). Don’t worry, saying, ‘What are we going to eat?’ or, ‘What are we going to drink?’ or, ‘What are we going to wear?’ The people of the world run after all these things. Your Father in heaven knows you need them all. Seek first God’s kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be given to you, too.”

Then there is the story of the widow in the Temple. She offers the last coins she has, worth about a couple of pennies, to God, because she trusts that God will take care of her.

Jesus feeds us, provides for us, physically and spiritually. He feeds our bodies with the fruits of the creation which He upholds, through the work and hands of farmers who grow the food, and drivers who bring the food to market. He feeds us with His body and blood under the bread and wine in the feast of Holy Communion so that we may not faint on the way to the life everlasting in His Kingdom. He provides, abundantly, exorbitantly. He feeds our spirits with His Word, which is proclaimed in the readings of the Church, preached in the sermons, sung in the hymns. His Holy Spirit strengthens us in our faith, the faith that receives forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life. He provides, abundantly, exorbitantly.

For all this, He simply asks us to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving, for when we thank Him, we are making a connection to Him. We are acknowledging Him as the true source of all our good, the One who provides us with all that we need for the support of this body and life, as Martin Luther explains the meaning of “daily bread.” God has provided us the true bread come down from heaven, Jesus Christ, who comes to you to offer Himself as true food and true drink, so that all who eat of Him, that is all who believe in Him, would have life, and life abundantly.

God will provide for you who trust in Him. Some of you may have material wealth. Some of you may not. Some of you may be materially poor, like the widow and her son. But all of you who trust in God are even now rich, rich in grace and blessed with peace and joy, knowing that a great feast of Word and Sacrament has been prepared for you, served in this Church founded on Jesus, the Cornerstone, built with the living stones of the apostles and all the faithful, departed and living, and yet to come, with Christ as the cornerstone. In the world to come, in the new heavens and new earth, on the great mountain, there will be such a feast, such an abundant, even exorbitant feast, that no one of the faithful will ever hunger again, for eternity. That is our hope.

As we know that we cannot love our enemies or forgive them by our power, we also know that we cannot stop worrying about the future by our own strength or reason. Only the Holy Spirit of Christ living in us can empower us to set aside our worries, give

them to God, and go about living out our vocations, the work to which he has called us to provide for our neighbors: our families, ourselves. We pray, “Give us this day our daily bread”, and we leave the rest in God’s hands to work all things for good in our lives.

Do not worry. The Lord will provide, abundantly, exorbitantly, here, and in the life to come. In Jesus + name. Amen.

And now may the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.