

“How the Lord Feeds You” (St. Matthew 14:13-21)

For Your Life in Christ the Week of the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost, August 3rd, 2014

Saint Paul’s Lutheran Church of Irvine, CA (LC-MS)

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Introduction: Jesus our Savior had and has compassion!

- A. The word in the original language is *splagchnizomai*. It means that “his gut moved” or his inward parts poured forth. His heart goes out to you in a deep, personal, and true way. He really, really cares and it always leads to His acting; doing something about it!
- B. Notice how St. Matthew tracks His observations, compassion, and action:

Matthew 4:23: “And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.”

Matthew 9:36: “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

Matthew 14:14: “When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.”

- C. These Scriptures describe more than just sympathy (sameness of feeling) or empathy (the ability to share in another’s emotions, thoughts, or feelings). Christ is so deeply moved when He sees His people in real need that He is so internally moved, it causes Him to act and help driven by deep love.
- D. How does He act; what does He do?
 - 1. He preaches the good news.
 - 2. He heals disease and sickness (remember what has been promised to us all at the end).
 - 3. He intervenes for and helps the harassed and helpless.

Part I: Where Does This Ministry Take Place?

- A. Matthew 14:13 = “[Jesus] withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place...”; Matthew 14:15 = the disciples say, “This is a desolate place...”.
- B. We too are in a desolate place in the sense that we live in a place impacted by the desolation of sin, the world, and the evil one:
 - 1. Think of the desolation represented by the Ebola virus and the havoc it is causing in West Africa.
 - 2. Consider the desolation of continued war, airline disasters, and the nightmare of kids taking the lives of others before taking their own.
 - 3. Consider your own desolation as you face the daily battle against your sinful nature and the guilt, shame and fear it produces in your heart.
 - 4. 1st Peter 2:11 calls us “sojourners and exiles”!
 - 5. The hymn “I’m But a Stranger Here” stanza one: ***“I’m but a stranger here, Heav’n is my home; Earth is a desert drear, Heav’n is my home. Danger and sorrow stand Round me on ev’ry hand; Heav’n is my fatherland, Heav’n is my home.”***
 - 6. These are indications of desolation. ***Jesus does not avoid the desolate places, but enters into them. He comes to us.***

Part II: Jesus Does Not Send Us Away, But Serves Us Where We Are At!

- A. The human reaction to the desolation is to feel overwhelmed!
- B. The disciples take in the situation with the great crowd, their recommendation to Jesus is clear: ***“This is a desolate place...send the crowds away...(vs 15)”***.
- C. Jesus doesn’t go along with the human perspective. But says:

Matthew 14:16: “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.”

D. He sets up the disciples for a critical lesson:

1. They are flabbergasted. Matthew 14:17: They only see their limitation: only five loaves and two fish.
2. We are like those first-century disciples: our circumstances and limitations seem to justify our pessimism. In our sin we see no way past our desolation and so we justify hearts that give up...there is never a good time to serve; there is never a good time to visit the desolate; to help those who are suffering; to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; to feed the hungry; to cloth those without clothing; to comfort the sorrowing...our sin convinces us we are too busy, too stretched out...the desolation is overwhelming and we convince ourselves that we are paralyzed.
3. There is only one answer: Jesus takes over:

Matthew 14:18: “And he said, ‘Bring them here to me.’”

E. Jesus serves you now through His ministry and there are three major contours of His ministry. In these, Christ brings you close to Himself and serves you NOW (take note of your role for others):

1. There is “general ministry” which entails all kinds of *service*. Here whatever is done in faith in Christian vocation as father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, citizen, worker, etc., God works through you to help other people. Praise God for holy vocation and general ministry that we all conduct! God serves others through you! For example:

Romans 12:10-13: “Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.”

2. There is “congregational ministry” which entails the royal priesthood (all Christians in the body of Christ) sharing the good news, not only as the support of the office of the ministry, but actually taking part in sharing the Gospel:

1st Peter 2:9: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

3. There is “the office of the ministry” referring to the office of Christ given to the church in and through which pastors serve:

1st Corinthians 4:1 (St. Paul referring to the apostolic ministry which is continued in the pastoral ministry): “This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.”

Part III: Christ’s Provision and Service to You Has No Limits!

- A. Just as the Lord took five loaves and two fish and fed 5000+, His ministry resources for you today are intended to continue! Through all of these, His compassion for you is evident!
- B. His ministry to you will never run out!
- C. Especially when it comes to what is most important:
 1. He gives you the forgiveness of all your sins. He wants you to have a clean conscience on account of His blood! We heard the story at Higher Things of a run-away little child after their baptism in the middle of worship...he ran away from his parents and ran to the front of the church after he had been baptized...he looked at the congregation and spread out his arms shouting: “All Clean!” Just like you!
 2. He gives you eternal life. Don’t take this gift for granted. Think about it: your death has been destroyed through His powerful and glorious resurrection!
 3. He gives you the Holy Spirit. He equips you to live as a Christian.
 4. He incorporates you into the body of Christ and all of the ministries are given to you: to receive from them and to contribute to them.

Conclusion: Christ’s Compassion Leads to Lavish Provision!

A. You are given “wine and milk” without cost (Isaiah 55):

Isaiah 55:1: “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

B. “Wine and milk” = lavish provision. These are symbols for the most important provisions that God gives you by grace.

C. These cost nothing!

D. The Lord does this for you out of compassion!

E. In response, we spend less time feeling sorry for ourselves and more time basking in His compassion and of course, sharing His compassion for others. Salvation leads to service. This is the life of Christ! Let us live it as once again He feeds us this day! This is how Christ feeds you, esp. as you are now about to receive His precious body and blood in, with, and under the bread and the wine in the Holy Sacrament. In this Sacrament, you remain in Christ’s compassion...you remain in His eternal life! In Jesus’ Name!