

ST. MARK 8:1-9 (8-9)
[GENESIS 2:7-17; ROMANS 6:19-23]
7TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
SUNDAY, JULY 30, 2017

SERMON ST. MARK 8:8-9

“SATISFACTION AND BEING SENT ARE GOD’S PLAN FOR HUNGRY SINNERS”

In the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. *[Amen.]*

Dear fellow hungry sinners, grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. *[Amen.]*

**“Feed Thy children, God most holy;
Comfort sinners poor and lowly.
O Thou Bread of Life from heaven,
Bless the food Thou here hast given!
As these gifts the body nourish,
May our souls in graces flourish
Till with saints in heav’nly splendor
At Thy feast due thanks we render.”**

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GOSPEL READING..... ST. MARK 8:8-9

⁸And they ate and were satisfied. And they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. ⁹And there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away.

PROLOGUE: The first sermon I delivered here almost twelve years ago on the weekend of September 18, 2005, emphasized the joyful message that **“God Gives Us His Grace Generously and Impartially.”** That was not only my inaugural message in this setting but it’s that gracious gospel truth that I’ve attempted to consistently emphasize in every sermon that I’ve preached from this pulpit.

As this weekend I deliver my last sermon to you, that message continues to be my main reminder for you. After all, it’s the only message that gives both temporal and eternal pardon and peace as well as life and salvation. But it’s not a message that God wants us to keep to ourselves or hide away for security. Rather, it’s a message that He desires for us to also freely and generously take to others. After all, it’s THE message that satisfies hungry sinners who long for spiritual comfort and consolation in the midst of brutal attacks by Satan, the world, and our own sinful selves ... hungry sinners who struggle in this nation and throughout the world where ever-increasing chaos is the daily order. In fact, it’s the message that we find in today’s Gospel Reading, in which we learn that ...

“SATISFACTION AND BEING SENT ARE GOD’S PLAN FOR HUNGRY SINNERS.”

It’s often said: **“God has a plan. It’s up to us to figure out what it is.”** Well, it’s true that God, who is the epitome of order and organization, does indeed have a plan consisting of many and varied details. But it’s not necessarily up to us to figure it out. What’s necessary is for us to be open to God’s communication of His plan to us; that is, be diligent in reading, hearing, and learning the contents of His Holy Word, The Bible. It’s therein that we confidently discern God’s plan and provision for what He created—not in ourselves, our own reason and understanding, or signs of nature found in the sun, moon, and stars. What it all comes down to is what Donald Guthrie wrote in his classic, *JESUS THE MESSIAH*, about the Lord’s miraculous feeding of thousands of hungry people: **“Although the concern that Jesus showed for physical needs must not be underrated, His own mind was on spiritual issues. If miraculous reproduction of food was all that man needed, the Messiah could have provided it, but it was not His mission to do so. The spiritual challenge was of far greater importance.”** *(Donald Guthrie in JESUS THE MESSIAH: AN ILLUSTRATED LIFE OF CHRIST.*

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Copyright © 1972 by The Zondervan Corporation, Grand Rapids, MI. Page 165.) And the spiritual challenge in this account pointed to the fact that ...

I. COMPASSION IS A HALLMARK OF JESUS. (1-3)

¹In those days, when again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat, **[Jesus] called his disciples to him and said to them, ²“I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. ³And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way.** And some of them have come from far away.”

“Compassion” is a deep-seated concern coupled with sympathy, pity, and tender mercy for the care and welfare of someone else. Jesus acknowledged His deep-seated concern for the care and welfare of the people who had spent three days away from their homes listening to and learning from Him. In so doing, they had consumed all of whatever food they had brought along and were, therefore, understandably hungry. In verbally stating His realization of the dangerous plight that would most likely occur if He simply dismissed them, Jesus testified to the stark reality of His deep-seated concern for their care and welfare.

The apostle Paul used this word when he wrote to the Philippians: **“For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection [compassion] of Christ Jesus.”** (*Phil 1:8 ESV*) In his letter to the Colossian Christians Saint Paul instructed them: **“Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.”** (*Col 3:12-14 ESV*) Notice that **“compassion”** heads the list from which other Christ-like qualities flow including forgiveness. And, our Lord's beloved disciple Saint John asked the following probing question in his first epistle: **“But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him [that is, does not have compassion for him], how does God's love abide in him?”** (*1 John 3:17 ESV*)

Compassion is a major pastoral attitude that I, together with Pastor Marks and Pastor Cole during a portion of his time here, had for many of you in your times of need. Even as Jesus did for those thousands of hungry people, so also we pastors feel deep-seated concern coupled with sympathy, pity, and tender mercy for the care and welfare, especially spiritually, of the people entrusted to our care. That's why we constantly strive to give you Jesus in Word and Sacrament as a means of expressing the compassion we have for you ... and encourage you to do so for one another as well.

But compassion without substantive action actually loses its meaning and significance. So it was then and still is today that ...

II. JESUS SHOWS HIS COMPASSION BY MEETING PEOPLES' NEEDS. (4-7)

⁴And his disciples answered him, “How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?” ⁵And he asked them, “How many loaves do you have?” They said, “Seven.” ⁶And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. **And he 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. ⁷And they had a few small fish. And having blessed them, he said that these also should be set before them.**

In his sermon on today's text, the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther said (albeit in his native German tongue): **“Behold, what a sympathetic Christ we have, who even provides food for our poor stomachs. Here new hope is awakened and man is comforted through the words of Christ; as he says: They lie there and wait for me until the third day. I must give them also what they need. Here you see that all who thus faithfully cling to the Word of God will be fed by God himself; for that is the nature and the power**

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of [Spirit-given] faith, which flows alone out of the Word of God.” (*SERMONS OF MARTIN LUTHER: VOLUMES 3 AND 4*. Edited by John Nicolas Lenker and translated by John Nicholas Lenker and Others. Reprinted 1983, 1995 by Baker Books, a division of Baker Book House Company, Grand Rapids, MI. Page 208.)

You see, Jesus not only felt and spoke His compassion for people but also took definitive action to comfort them by providing for their needs of body and soul. Our congregation follows His example when every Friday and at other times by personal request we distribute food to the hungry people of our community. But Jesus didn't stop with meeting the urgent temporal physical needs of people. He also met the severe eternal spiritual need (singular!) of people, namely, forgiveness of sins ... that results in the healing of sin-sick souls ... that results in eternal life with Himself in the glorious heavenly mansions.

That severe spiritual need was brought about by sin as we honestly admitted at the beginning of this Divine Service: **“I confess to God Almighty, before the whole company of heaven and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned in thought, word, and deed by my fault, by my own fault, by my own most grievous fault; wherefore I pray God Almighty to have mercy on me, forgive me all my sins, and bring me to everlasting life. Amen.”** (*LUTHERAN SERVICE BOOK*. Page 253.) You see, the sinless Christ Himself took our sins that would otherwise condemn us to the everlasting torments of the excruciatingly painful fiery hell upon Himself, suffered the punishment for them and our guilt unto death on Calvary's cross, and now covers us with His white robes of righteousness. He did so in the sacred waters of Holy Baptism; assures us of such in the reading and hearing of God's Holy Word; reminds us of such with the words of Holy Absolution; and gives us certainty of such in the Blessed Sacrament of Holy Communion.

It's been my joy and delight many many times as one of a succession of pastors who have served you to announce that **“Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”** (*IBID.* Page 151.) In so doing, together with Pastor Cole for a brief time and with Pastor Marks for many years, you gave me the opportunity to joyfully share with you the solution to your most important need because of sin, namely, Jesus Christ and Him crucified and resurrected. And for that delightful privilege I give you my sincere thanks and heartfelt appreciation.

So, as I complete my tenure as your administrative pastor, I leave you with compassionate words of comfort and encouragement found in today's liturgy propers that flow forth from and emphasize the truth that ...

“SATISFACTION AND BEING SENT ARE GOD'S PLAN FOR HUNGRY SINNERS.”

First of all, remember that God truly cares for you and provides what you need, not necessarily what you want, in this life even as today's Old Testament Reading recorded that He did for Adam and Eve: **“And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.”** (*Gen 2:8-9a ESV*) Today's Epistle Reading, however, identified the most important essential element of all that God provides for you: **“But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** (*Rom 6:22-23 ESV*)

It's in God's graciousness of providing what we need, even as Jesus did with the hungry people in today's Gospel Reading, that we discover that ...

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- I. COMPASSION IS A HALLMARK OF JESUS. (1-3) That attribute of our Savior is further enhanced by His invitation in today's Gradual: **"Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD [YAHWEH]. Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed."** (*Ps 34:11, 5 ESV*) Nevertheless, His compassion is much more than just a feeling; it is substantive action as made known by the truth that ...
- II. JESUS SHOWS HIS COMPASSION BY MEETING PEOPLES' NEEDS. (4-7) That surely motivates actions and words of grateful praise as exemplified in today's Introit: **"Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy! Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm! God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne."** (*Ps 47:1, 6-8 ESV*)

My final emphatic reminder is the theme our Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod set forth for this 500th anniversary of the Reformation, namely, **"It's STILL all about Jesus!"** Keeping that declaration ever uppermost in our minds and hearts may we always connect it with today's Collect petition: **"We humbly implore You to put away from us all hurtful things and to give us those things that are profitable for us."**

God grant it all for the sake of Jesus Christ, His humble Son, our holy Savior.

[Amen.]

In the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. [Amen.]