

10 August 2011
Pentecost 8 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Greenspring Village, Springfield, VA

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“Our Lord Who Provides”

Text: Mark 8:1-9 (Genesis 2:7-17; Romans 6:19-23)

If you want bread, if you need bread - or any food for that matter - don't look to the grocery store, your garden, or even to the farmers who grow it - look to your Father who is in heaven. Look to God who has come down to us in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the provider of food for all creation. The feeder of all. *He opens His hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing* (Psalm 145:16).

Oh, He uses the farmer. He uses the grocer. He uses the baker. But it is He who truly provides. It is your Father in heaven who makes the earth grow and produce fruit, sending the rains in their season, keeping the sun in its course, providing the bees and other insects to pollinate. This is not just the laws of nature. Without the hand of the Lord doing all of this, we would have no food, and we would have no life.

It is as we heard from Genesis - it is God who made our world and us. He made this world *for* us. Without Him, there is nothing. Though we think things are ours - yours and mine - and though we think things happen apart from God, this is all a sinful delusion; a satanic fallacy from the evil one who wants us to think we have life apart from God. That God is optional. No, all is His. All in His wisdom, He made, and He continues to keep. For God, a loving Father, does not make something and leave it on its own. His care and love continue. He is an active, loving, involved Father.

There are men today who father children, but are not fathers. They beget children, but then do not care for them and pay no attention to them. But this is not how our heavenly Father is. He is a true Father in every sense of the term. Begetting children both physically and spiritually, and then continuing to care for them - for us - in every part and time of life.

And so we read that when God created man and a home for man - a Garden in Eden - He also provided water. A river flowed out of Eden and then divided into four rivers, to water the Garden, to keep and sustain the life planted there - and especially the tree of life that was planted there. This is more than just geographic information - we are being taught about our Father in heaven, His care, and His providing the water of life.

It is a theme that will pop up all throughout the Scriptures - God providing the water of life. From the waters of the flood that saved Noah and his family from the

sin and evil in the world, to the waters of the Red Sea that saved the people of Israel from the Egyptians, to the water God provided His people in the wilderness, to the water that flowed from the side of Jesus on the cross, to the water that flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb in the book of Revelation - the water of God which, again, waters the tree of life. But most importantly for you and I is the water of God in Holy Baptism, by which He has given us life. It is the water of God that gives us much more than mere gold or food or drink - but which gives us spiritual life, new life, eternal life. Because of baptism, we are not now what we once were. For we were dead in sin, but now are alive in Christ.

And so with the feeding of the 4,000, Jesus gives us a picture of God's ongoing work for us. Caring for us both physically and spiritually. And we see that this is who Jesus is - the Lord of all, the God of creation, the Almighty clothed in human flesh. But more than clothed - incarnated in human flesh, to be our Saviour. To lay down His life for us on the tree of the cross, that paying the wages of death for us, the cross now become for us a tree of life. That the water and blood that flowed from His side in death give life to the world. Life, which is more than just food for each day; but life that lasts forever.

For this is our greatest need. You may not wake up each morning with a hunger pang for eternal life like you do with a hunger for food - but you should. That we do not long for this is a sign of the sin that lives in us and that has dulled our spiritual senses and lives. But Jesus has come to provide us what we need, and to rekindle in us that spiritual life and desire that we lost.

And He has. It is finished. And now, as St. Paul said, no longer slaves of sin but now slaves of God, the water and food of God produces in you the fruits of faith. You no longer are living a life that will end in death; you will now die a death that ends in life. And that reality changes how you live. For you are living and preparing for a life still to come. And so your life is not just about what you can get here and now, but what you are given that will last forever. Sin serves the life that is passing away. Faith looks forward to that life that will never pass away.

So in the wilderness that day, with some 4,000 people, we see our Creator as server and Saviour. It is a glimpse of His ultimate work for us. For it is after three days, Mark tells us, that He provides the bread of life for the people. In the same way, after three days - His three days in the tomb - Jesus rises from the dust of death to provide us with the bread of life: His own body. And feeding on Him, we are forgiven. Feeding on Him, we are sanctified. Feeding on Him, we are satisfied. That in the wildernesses of this world and life, and in our struggle against sin and temptation, we hunger not and fear no evil. For as that day with the 4,000, so with us today. Our Lord is with us, providing all that we need.

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.