

10 July 2013
Pentecost 7 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Greenspring Village, Springfield, VA

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“Bread of Sin, Bread of Life”

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

If you're like me, you take bread for granted. It's so basic and it's so everywhere. You just go to the store and buy it. White bread, wheat bread, potato bread, corn bread, rye bread, soda bread, sourdough bread, pita bread, black bread, pumpnickle, sliced or in rolls or flat, baguette, biscuit, or bageled, challa or croissant, leavened or unleavened, and I could go on for a very long time. I googled “different kinds of bread” and got 20.5 million results.

But it was not always so. In fact, there was a time was there was no bread. In the beginning. There was no bread in Paradise. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve simply ate the fruit of the trees and the vegetation God had provided for them. There was no work involved - just picking, eating, and enjoying. Good gifts from their heavenly Father.

But with sin everything changed. The good and pleasant work God gave Adam become toil. Weeds and thorns and thistles would now grow and choke out good plants. For, God told Adam, *cursed is the ground because of you*. But then also this: *and by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread*. No longer would their everyday needs be satisfied so easily and so well. Now, bread would be their food staple. Bread, which takes work. Tilling the ground, planting the seed, harvesting the grain, grinding the kernel, kneading the dough, and baking. Exhausting labor, just to eat. Just to live. Just to survive.

When Adam and Eve reached out for that one fruit God asked them not to eat, they thought things would get better. But they got worse. Much worse. And not even just *sweat of the brow* to eat worse, but as St. Paul reminded us, *death* worse. For ***the wages of sin is death***. Bread is a reminder of sin.

But we've tried to make the best of it. That's why we've come up with so many different kinds of bread over the years. So many different tastes and textures, shapes and sizes. But we do that with *all* that sin has brought into our lives, don't we? We try to make the best of it. Do what we can. Accept the things we cannot change. But you can only do that so long. Because sooner or later sin is going to catch up with you. Sooner or later, sin beats you up, chews you up, and spits you out. Sooner or later, sin is going to reap *its* wages. Our friends and loved ones, you and I, are going to die. And that's a pain that doesn't soon go away.

But then in steps Jesus. We hear of Him today *in a desolate place*. That too caused by us, caused by sin. No desolate places in the beginning, in Paradise. But Jesus came from *His* Paradise and stepped into our now desolate-in-sin world. For He has compassion. He makes your problem His problem. And so He has compassion on the 4,000 people there with Him. The 4,000 who have been with Him for three days, feasting on His teaching, on His Word, but have nothing to eat. Their problem is His problem. So He will feed them, just as He did Adam and Eve in Paradise - freely, easily, and well.

And just as He did when He fed the 5,000. The disciples were there with Him for that miracle too, and not that long ago - but they still don't get it. They still wonder *how?* How will Jesus feed so many with so little?

But this is exactly what Jesus has come to do - break and undo the power of sin and reverse the curse. To turn our little into much, our need into bounty, our death into life. And so in that desolate place, Jesus takes the little we have and makes it Paradise again. There is an abundance. More than enough. The people all eat and are satisfied, and there still is more. For that is the way of it with God. More than enough. Blessing upon blessing. Grace upon grace.

And this is a picture of what Jesus would do for us to meet our spiritual need as well. *For did you catch that hint in the reading?* The people had been with Jesus **for three days**, Mark says. An historical fact, yes, but more than that. An intentional timing. For what happened to Jesus after three days? That's when our problem - not of food, bigger than that: of sin and death - was resolved. That's when Jesus rose from our death, from our tomb, after having paid the price we couldn't pay. He went to the most desolate place of all, the cross, where He was forsaken not only by man but also by His Father. He made our problem His problem and now makes His victory our victory and His life our life. He took our sin to the grave and left it there. Dead. Gone.

And that is the victory and life given to you in Baptism, when in those waters you died and rose with Christ. That is the victory and life given to you in Absolution, when Jesus proclaims to you the forgiveness of all your sin - that your sin is His sin and your sin is now dead and gone. And that is the victory and life given to you through the new tree of life, as you eat that fruit - the Body and Blood of Jesus - and are filled with His life. Life that will never end. And with that, Paradise is restored. What Adam and Eve lost is restored, and more. It's yours, to come and eat. To come and live. To come and enjoy. All the work of Jesus. All His gift. All for you.

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