

Pentecost 8 with Confirmation

Jesu Juva

“A Faithful Lord”

Text: Mark 6:30-44 (Jeremiah 23:1-6; Ephesians 2:11-22)

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Kitty, Juliana, Jarra, and Destry will today take their place with the 5,000 and receive the feeding of their Lord. They have sat at His feet these past few years, heard His Word, and learned from Him. Now He will feed them, with food even greater than there was that day. For He will feed them not with five loaves of bread and two fish, but with His very Body and Blood. Food not for the body, but food for the soul.

And just like the crowd that day, they have learned. But I'll admit: you did not always come running to learn, like the crowd did that day! Like we just sang, your cry went up: “*How long*” (LSB #644 v.3)? But you heard, and learned.

And this is what they learned: they learned first who they are: sinners. Sinners with no hope of spiritual life, now or forever, in themselves. They are, as Luther would say, spiritual maggot sacks. They came up with their own colorful term for that themselves, which I'll let you ask them later. But ugly, deformed, infected, and dead spiritually they learned we all are.

But they also learned who their Lord is, that He is their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. And that beyond all human reason, He loves us maggot sacks. That Jesus laid down His life for them and they have been ***brought near by His blood***. That Jesus ***broke down the dividing wall*** of sin between them and God, to reconcile them and make them holy in the forgiveness of their sins. That in Jesus they now have a gracious and merciful Father and have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And having heard the self-revealing voice of the Father, they then learned from His voice to speak back to Him in prayer, especially the prayer given them to pray by Jesus Himself, the Lord's Prayer.

And they pray *Our Father* because they are baptized children of God, begotten from above by water and the Word. And they learned that this baptism is not a past event, consigned to the photo albums, but an ongoing reality for them. A reality to live in daily, drowning that old sinful Adam in them, and rising to life again with the forgiveness that pours forth from that font and never stops.

Never stops, for the voice of absolution calls them back to that day, to receive even now what was promised them then, and that confession is a gift - that we need not live in fear of our sins and failures, but we can confess them and know that the words we will hear back are not ones of judgment or condemnation, but of love - that their sins are forgiven in Jesus. And these words, spoken by the called and ordained servant of Christ, *are just as valid and certain in heaven as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself.*

And they have learned that all of this leads to steps they will take today, to the altar and Table of the Lord, to be fed by Him.

They have learned. Not perfectly, to be sure. Their learning has taught them much, but even more has taught them what they don't know. They have learned, as Luther learned, that the catechism is something that needs to be learned and relearned everyday and all life long. A constant learning, a constant feeding, for we have a constant enemy, seeking to rob us of our treasure and of our Saviour.

And it won't be easy. We're going to hear that next week in fact. For the twelve disciples had learned much from the Lord. They were there while Jesus was teaching the crowd and were not only eye-witnesses but "hand-witnesses" of this great miracle, they themselves passing out the bread and fish that should not have even been enough for them, yet which fed the multitude. And yet not even a few hours later, their faith lets them down.

You too. And so too Kitty, Juliana, Jarra, and Destry. Your confirmation doesn't mean that you're home free. Despite the joy of this day, your faith is going to be challenged. Your confirmation is you putting a big, fat target on your back for satan to aim at. For he is not going to throw up his hands now and admit defeat. *Oh, they're confirmed now - oh well!* Not at all and quite the contrary. Your confirmation means that he is going to *increase* the number and intensity of his attacks against you. He hates this day. He hates your faith. He hates your confession. He hates you. And so he is going to use every weapon in his arsenal to attack you and bring you down. And Destry, even your arms are no match for him and his. If you try to face him on your own, you're going down.

But as you have learned: you're not on your own. You are baptized into Christ. Your foundation is Jesus Christ your Lord. So when you are weak, He is your strength. When you fall, He is your forgiveness. When you struggle, He is your refuge. When you fear, He is your peace. You have a big, fat target on you, but you have an even bigger Saviour around you, and in you, and for you. You have His promises, all signed, sealed, and delivered. And so you can be confident. For as Jeremiah said, you have a shepherd, a good one; one who will not let you down. And His name is: ***the Lord in our righteousness.*** Or you know Him by this name: Jesus.

And now you're going to make some promises, that what you have learned you believe, and what you believe is so precious and important that you would rather die than recant it or fall away from it. Pretty bold promise that. You know, when most of the people here made that same promise, it was pretty easy to be a Christian. Most people were. Christianity was respected and an integral part of our social fabric. Not so much anymore. You make this vow even as people attack you on the internet. You make this vow as you see Christians beheaded for confessing Christ. You make this vow even as politicians boldly say that we have to change our beliefs to get with the times. You make this vow as being an orthodox Christian is as strange to many people as looking at a ten-headed alien from another planet! Traditional marriage? Sanctity of life? Chastity? Objective truth? You've got to be kidding!

We've had it easy. No more. It's a brave new world, satan's ranks are swelling, and the truth seems on the ropes.

But do not be deceived. That's exactly what satan wants you to believe. That the hostility is too great, the evil is too great, the world is too far gone, that five loaves of bread and two fish aren't enough! *But we have Jesus*. And with Jesus, five loaves of bread and two fish are five loaves and two fish more than enough.

And so today, in your promises and in your confession, you hold up Christ crucified against the hostility and proclaim: *Sin disturb my soul no longer, I am baptized into Christ!* You hold up Christ crucified against the threats and assaults of satan and his minions and proclaim: *Satan, hear this proclamation: I am baptized into Christ!* And you hold up Christ crucified against death and all the weapons of this world and proclaim: *Death you cannot end my gladness, I am baptized into Christ* (LSB #594)! And you say this not alone, but we say it with you. We stand behind you. And we will feast with you. We and the whole Church, the angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven. Jesus was faithful to them, just as He is faithful to you.

I can't tell you how proud I am of these kids. You should be too. They've already been on the front lines, speaking the truth, proclaiming Christ, and getting attacked for it. They've asked good questions and we've had great conversations. Do I wish they would have learned a little more . . . worked a little harder . . . sure. But I wish that everyday of myself as well. I set the bar pretty high. But in the end, *the Church's One Foundation* is not them or about cramming all the right knowledge into their brains, it's *Jesus Christ our Lord* (LSB #644), and His faith in their hearts. And this the Holy Spirit has worked in their hearts through water and His Word. And this faith their Saviour will now feed with His Body and Blood.

So today we will sing *Te Deum Laudamus* for them to end the service: *We Praise You and Acknowledge You, O God* (LSB #941). That's also the theme for the Higher Things

conference they will leave for very early tomorrow morning, for a week with probably 700-800 youth their age, learning, worshiping, and having fun together.

But even more than that, we will sing *Te Deum* for the work of God **for** them, the work of God **in** them, and the work of God **through** them for others. For Kitty, Juliana, Jarra, and Destry, in you today we see the promise of God fulfilled in You.

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