

2 August 2026  
Pentecost 10

Saint Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Vienna, VA

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“Someone Else Paid”

Text: Isaiah 55:1-5; Matthew 14:13-21; Romans 9:1-13

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

The prophet Isaiah said today:

***He who has no money, come, buy and eat!***

***Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.***

When I was Pastor before here, at my church in New York, I had a little old lady who just couldn't understand those words. She would always ask me: *How can you buy anything if you have no money?* She was an immigrant. She knew what it was like to be poor and hungry and have no money and so not be able to get what you need. She knew how the world worked, and this was not it!

And she was right. *Mostly*. But sometimes it is. There was a thing not too long ago - maybe some folks still do it - when in line at a coffee shop or a toll booth, people would pay for one or two or three people coming after them, but not tell them. Remember that? So when the next people in line came up to pay, their bill was already taken care of. Maybe you were on the receiving end of that. It's a pleasant surprise. Because mostly, in this world, that's not how it is. You want something, you gotta pay for it. That little old lady at my church in New York knew that well. She had lived a hard life.

So maybe, when the prophet Isaiah spoke these words that we heard today, they sounded a bit *off*, a bit *wrong* to the people back then, too. But that's *exactly* why Isaiah speaks them! To grab their attention. To teach them that while this is the way the world works, it is not the way God works. That when it comes to your spiritual life, and the spiritual food and drink you need to live now and forever, **someone else paid that price for you**. The someone else that Isaiah had just preached a chapter or two before this one. The one who paid the price for your sin. The one who paid the price for your peace. The one who paid the price for your life. That what you need, you have. God was sending His servant to do that for you, Isaiah prophesied.

And that's what John the Baptist prophesied, too, some 700 years after Isaiah. But

not just that God *would be* sending His servant to do that, but that He had! That servant was here. *Now. Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world* (John 1:29)! Or in other words, the one who has come to pay the price for you. To shed his blood and give His life for you, that you may live and eat and drink in the kingdom of God. A feast *you could never* afford! But which is now here for you, because of Him. Because of that one. Jesus.

But now, as we heard in the Gospel today, John's voice had been silenced. Just as Isaiah's voice had been. Isaiah by being sawn in two. John by beheading. But now that the one they prophesied had come, and God said no more prophets after John, that meant now the time had come. To do it. To pay the price. To fulfill God's Word.

So Jesus, hearing that John has been killed, ***withdraws to a desolate place by himself***. Not because He's sad, I don't think. He knows the ending of John's life here and now is his birthday in heaven. But the ending of John's life means the laying down of his own - soon. So Jesus ***withdraws*** because going out to desolate places is where God often sends people to prepare them. When people go out to the wilderness in the Scriptures, that's *a signal* - something's going to happen.

And as we heard, it does! Jesus goes out and ***the crowds follow Him***. In fact, they somehow get there before He does! So that when ***He goes ashore, He sees a great crowd*** already gathered there. And Jesus does what Jesus always does: ***He has compassion on them. He heals their sick***. He takes care of them. It's what Jesus does, as the Good Shepherd.

So what of Jesus' preparation in this desolate place? Is He robbed of this? OR, maybe He didn't go out for His own preparation - maybe it was to prepare them. The crowds. The people. To teach them, about Himself.

So He does as Isaiah prophesied. He gives them ***food without price***. From just ***five loaves of bread and two fish***, He feeds ***five thousand men plus women and children***. He takes the bread and fish, says a blessing, breaks, and then gives. And they all ate and were satisfied. Every. Last. One. Jesus feeding not just a few (as our generosity might), but a great multitude that could scarcely be numbered. And there's even more. More food left over. The disciples couldn't imagine feeding so many. Jesus couldn't imagine feeding so few. He had come to do far more. To provide the food and drink of immortality *for the world*. For *all* people of *all* time.

Food and drink that is here for you today. Food and drink that not only has been paid for by the Body and Blood of Jesus, but that **IS** the Body and Blood of Jesus! Where we're living may not be a wilderness, but it is in some ways. For some, this world is a desolate place. A place of loneliness, of fear, of trouble, of hunger. People

living from day to day, wondering what's next, waiting for the other shoe to drop. A place of sickness and death and uncertainty.

But in the midst of all that, **an altar turned table, by the Lamb sacrificed on it, and now given from it.** Food and drink without money and without price, because it has been paid for *not with gold or silver, but with the precious blood of Christ*, the Lamb of God *without blemish or spot* (1 Peter 1:18-19). The blood of God which is enough to pay for the sin of the world, to give life to the world. And so, Isaiah says, come and ***delight yourself in this rich food!*** This rich food here for you. And live. There is no food richer, no food better. *O living bread from heaven, how well you feed your guests*, we just sang (LSB #642).

Which seems like a no brainer! And yet, somehow, our brains get in the way! Isaiah's words to the people then hit home for us still today when he says that with all this,  
***Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,  
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?***

It's a good question. Why do we keep looking for better? Why do we keep striving for more? Why do we think this not enough? Yes, enjoy the things of this world and life that God has given you, but remember that your life doesn't come from them. It can't. You may be successful, you may be admired, you may be happy, you may be living' the dream! But what happens when you need something money can't buy? When these things *you* gave your life for can't give you the life you need? When sickness or age begins to sap your life or pounces upon you in a moment? Or when death draws near? *What then?*

This was Paul's struggle with his fellow Jews, as we heard in the Epistle today. He says: *Guys! What are you doing? You have **the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the law, the worship, the promises, the patriarchs, and from you has come the Christ***, the Messiah, the Saviour! The one promised to Abraham, and then to Isaac and Jacob, has come. Why are you turning away? Why? **The price has been paid.** There is food and drink for you. Jesus died and rose for you. There is life for you.

And it is all here for you, too.

So maybe it would be good to take stock of our own lives . . . *How are you spending your time?* . . . And isn't that an interesting way to say that? Spending your time! Like we *spend* money! And to get what? Your effort, your time, your money . . . Are you being wise or foolish? Are you trying to get, to *buy*, what Jesus has already purchased and gotten for you? Do you think Jesus is just about the next life, but this life is up to me? Can those two be separated?

Jesus went out to that desolate place to give the people what they needed. He led them to that place of nothingness to give them everything. To give them Himself. That's why He came into our world. That's why He comes to you here and now. That's why Jesus is still today *taking, blessing, breaking, and giving* bread. That all who feast now, feast with Him forever. Feasting now for the forgiveness we need, the life we need, the salvation we need. All here for you. That when this life is over, we feast and delight ourselves in Him in His kingdom.

So come! All you who are thirsty. All you who hunger. All you poor sinners who have nothing for God, ***come, buy and eat!*** He paid for you. That's what He spent all He had on! He gave all He had for you.

So come. And as Isaiah also said, listen. And listening, hear. And hearing, believe. Believe those words you hear after receiving that for which you did not pay. That *the true Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ* - that purchased you and gave you life - *will keep and preserve you* - now! - *steadfast unto everlasting life*. So that you can *depart* - both this altar and this life - well fed, and *in peace*.

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

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.