

Lent IV

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[0 : 00] As we began our Lenten journey together a few weeks ago, we heard from the fourth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, how Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness.

In our Gospel reading here of John chapter 6 this morning, we now hear the reversal of this temptation. Jesus is depicted by John here as the one who feeds his people and gives eternal life. Now, let me jar your memory for a bit about our Lord's first encounter with Satan, recorded in Matthew chapter 4. You probably recall that after our Lord had fasted some 40 days and 40 nights, the devil approached him, tempting him to turn stones into bread in order to fill his hungry stomach. Our Lord refused and said, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

The devil then took Jesus up to the pinnacle of the temple and he told himself to throw himself down so that the angels would come and rescue him.

[1 : 20] And our Lord responded by saying to the devil that he shall not tempt him, that is Jesus, because Jesus is the Lord God.

And the final temptation came as the devil told our Lord to bow down and worship him. And our Lord responded with a strong rebuke and said, You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.

Here in our gospel reading of John chapter 6, we heard how Jesus and his disciples go up to another high place, not the pinnacle of the temple, but now a mountain.

And our Lord then began teaching his disciples. We are told that Passover was now drawing nigh or drawing near.

Passover was that high Jewish festival where the people of God would receive a meal, remembering and participating mystically in our Lord's deliverance of his people out of Egypt.

[2 : 33] Passover recalled how the Lord passed over those homes where the blood of a spotless lamb was painted over the doorposts of each house.

And it was at this time of God, of celebrating God's victory over the Egyptians and the people's release from slavery, where they now enjoyed freedom and deliverance.

They were given their lives back. It was a festive time. It was a somber time in the sense of remembering what happened, but a festive time remembering that God had brought his people out of slavery, out of despair, and it commemorated with a meal.

It was during this time when Passover was drawing near that Jesus looked up and he saw a great multitude, a great crowd coming towards him.

And our Lord asked his disciples, specifically Philip, where they could buy food for so many people. And he asked this question to see what his disciples would say.

[3 : 48] It was only after the disciples could scrounge up two fish and five barley loaves of bread that our Lord then did this great miracle of multiplying these meager five loaves of bread into thousands upon thousands, feeding a crowd of at least 15,000 souls.

So here's what we've learned so far. Jesus is the one who provides bread for the people as they are hungry. He is not only their deliverer.

He is the God who creates, the God who multiplies for his people. And he stands not on Mount Sinai like Moses, but he is now on a mountain.

And he surrounds himself with his 12 disciples, offering bread to the hungry. And the response of the people is that he is truly the long-awaited prophet who has now come into the world.

They recognize Jesus as another type of Moses. But Jesus isn't merely a prophet. He is the very life, the life for the world.

[5 : 17] He is the God and creator who has come in human flesh as both provider and deliverer for his people. He is the one that rained down manna as the people made their way out of Egypt.

It is, however, the instructions he gives at the end of this feeding that provides the key for the significance of this event. We read in John chapter 6 in verses 12 and 13 the following words. So when they were filled, he said to his disciples, gather up the fragments that remain so that nothing, nothing is lost. Therefore they gathered them up and they filled 12 baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.

These 12 disciples gather 12 baskets of fragments from this meal. Why is this detail so important? Because the 12 baskets represent the 12 disciples who represent the church. But these 12 disciples represent the 12 tribes of Israel and therefore the kingdom of God.

[6 : 46] And as a side note, the 24 elders that you read about in the book of Revelation is exactly that. It is the 12 tribes of Israel and now these 12 disciples.

And these fragments portray the perpetual acts of worship by the church. That is to distribute the bread of heaven to the people of God in celebrating that it is Jesus who is who is that great and final Passover lamb.

He is the shepherd now who leads and feeds his sheep. Bread represents life. And the high place represents heaven.

And worship now is given to the one God who has come as our deliverer. And it's not Moses. It is the one who supplied manna to the people on their journey through the wilderness as they came out of Egypt.

And that one now is in their midst. Jesus is the bread. He is the manna that has come down from heaven. And he imparts life to those who are hungry.

[8 : 12] Friends, we live in a world that is absolutely starving. And you say, how can that be? We have food all around us. True. But we are living in a world that is starving for meaning, for hope.

A world that is in complete denial of its own malnourishment. we live in a world where people are bound to sin and living in a constant state of despair.

And the mission of the church is not merely to be an organization that provides a social outlet. A community organization that we just come and be a part of.

The mission of the church is not for its own self-preservation. the mission of the church is to bring the life of God found only in Christ to a world that is enslaved.

A world that's enslaved to sin and death and is dying of malnourishment. And the way we do this is first by feeding on Christ.

[9 : 25] The bread of heaven. the eternal life for all who will eat. And then we are to call people to join us on this journey in faith that ends with another great feast.

The marriage supper of the Lamb that will never end. Eternal feasting and communion with God and with one another as the church with all those that have gone before us.

those that we have never met those that we do not see. We join now and our ultimate purpose as people who are made in the image of God is to come and offer praise to offer ourselves in service to God because of what he has done for us.

Communion freedom with God and freedom from the shackles of sin and death is why the church is here. To offer that to the world to enjoy that.

That's what our Savior bestows upon the church. And the church is then to take this life-giving bread of God found in the resurrected immortal flesh of Jesus Christ who is now received in our bodies and by our mouths we receive Christ and then we are to take that which we receive and give to the world.

[11 : 03] we are to offer this life our lives as a living sacrifice which is nothing more than the life of Christ now who lives in us and through us for the sake of the world.

That's why we're here. We're not here to be a social club. We're not here just to give somebody something to do on a Sunday morning.

we're here to feed on Christ and then to give ourselves freely for the sake of our neighbor. Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.