

Trinity VII

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Date: 31 July 2022

Preacher: Fr. Wade Miller

[0 : 00] Once again this morning we heard of Jesus feeding a large crowd of people. Here in St. Mark's Gospel, it is 4,000 people that our Lord feeds besides the women and children.

We often hear of our Lord feeding hungry people throughout our yearly lectionary readings from the church's calendar. Most often we hear about our Lord feeding 5,000.

But here in St. Mark's Gospel, which is also recorded in St. Matthew's Gospel, there is a feeding of the 4,000 as well. Now this miraculous event was not a one-time thing. It was a miracle that was repeated.

And you have heard in the past how this event connects to Israel. The people of God. As they made their way out of Egypt and into the wilderness.

The Lord would rain manna, that is a sweet bread from heaven providing food for the journey as the Israelites made their way towards the promised land.

[1 : 17] Jesus now performs this miracle as a sign that he is not only a Moses-type figure, although that is certainly true.

He is greater than Moses. For he is the very one who provided such bread for his people in that wilderness in their time of need.

Jesus is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Moses. Jesus is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Moses. And our Lord is pointing to the fact that he is the bread.

The bread from heaven that has come down to give eternal life to the whole world. Now with that being said, I want you to highlight, to note, and I want to emphasize two points from our gospel reading this morning.

The first has to do with the geographical location of this miraculous feeding. The second centers around our Lord's disposition towards the crowd.

[2 : 25] If we were to read several verses before our gospel text this morning, we would hear from Mark chapter 7, verse 31, the following words.

That Jesus was in the region of the Decapolis. The Decapolis. What in the world is the region of the Decapolis?

The Decapolis was made up of Greco-Roman cities, ten of those, south of the Sea of Galilee. And what you need to know about this area, it was a place full of Gentiles.

The feeding of the 5,000 takes place in Bethsaida, that is to the north, made up of the Jewish people. But here Jesus is doing this miracle right in the heart of the land of the Gentiles.

St. Mark records Jesus doing this miracle in the Decapolis, representing that the people of God are not merely made up of the Israelites. That the covenant with Abraham is coming to completion in the sense that now Jesus is bringing his kingdom to the whole world.

[3 : 44] Gentiles are now being offered the bread from heaven. Our Lord is the God who cares for all people and all nations.

He is the one who gives life to the whole world. St. Mark's account of this miracle being performed in the Gentile region leads us to the next point, which is our Lord's disposition to the Gentiles.

Rather than pronouncing that these Gentiles are unclean and cast out these pagan reprobates who need to be removed, he looks with great compassion.

He is stirred inwardly with great compassion towards these people. They had not eaten for three days.

So our Lord is moved with great pity to act with great mercy on behalf of these hungry, wayward people. And that compassion is significant when we think about how this text applies to us.

[4 : 57] Now, it's important to note that St. Mark's gospel was written during a time of great persecution of the early Gentile Christians living in Rome under the reign of the infamous Emperor

Nero.

Not a good guy. In other words, this gospel was written during a horrific time of suffering in the life of the church. And you could probably make the connection to why the emphasis upon Jesus being moved to compassion is so important for those hearing Mark's gospel.

Jesus is not only the creator who supplies food for the hungry. He is the God of compassion and mercy for those suffering for the kingdom of God.

He is the God who seeks out the alienated and the outcast. He is the God who comes alongside the weak and the vulnerable. He is the God who understands and experiences suffering and pain that led to his own death on a tree.

He is the God who comes alongside the Holy Spirit. He is the God who dwells in us so that now we dwell in him. And now we are called to live out this cross, this life of the cross, making our way as pilgrims to the eternal city of God.

[6 : 28] And this would not have fallen on deaf ears for Mark's audience. At the end of the story and after the people had eaten their fill, our Lord tells his disciples to gather up leftovers in seven large baskets.

In the accounts of the feeding of the 5,000, the disciples were to gather fragments into 12 baskets, representing the 12 tribes of Israel. So why in this account of the feeding of the 4,000, are the disciples to gather leftovers into seven baskets?

Well, the number seven represents the seven nations that possessed the promised land before Israel was to drive them out of the land because of their wickedness.

These seven nations are explicitly named in Deuteronomy chapter 7, verse 1. They were the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

And these nations are alluded again in Acts chapter 13, verse 19. But here's what you need to know. What our Lord is communicating is that these one-time bitter enemies of Israel are now invited to share in the kingdom of God.

[7 : 56] And he is feeding them, which is one of the highest ways you could practice hospitality and charity in the ancient world. And the call of these disciples now is to make disciples of all nations.

We are called to communion with our creator who invites us into the most intimate union possible by taking of his very own body.

What this means for us is that instead of fighting with people, seeking vengeance, being harsh, and being nasty, we are called to extend the bread of heaven to all people, to all nations.

We are called to receive the bread of heaven, the very body of Christ, and then to use our bodies as vehicles for God's grace for the entire world.

Our bodies now carry the life of our resurrected Lord, so that we use all that we are and all that we have for the kingdom of God, to extend the kingdom of God to others.

[9 : 18] We are called to be sacraments to the world by extending the life and love of Christ to others. Christ lives in us, through us, and then to others.

And we are to do this even in the most dire of circumstances. The hearer of Mark's gospel would have taken great comfort in hearing this God who is full of compassion and mercy, the God who cares for those, especially those who are suffering unjustly.

And these words and actions from our Lord should provide us with great comfort as well. Dear friends, we are called to receive the compassion of our Lord by partaking of the bread in this holy meal, which is the bread of life, which is the body of Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

We are then to leave this holy place and to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, so that the bread of heaven, Jesus Christ, might be extended to the world.

That's our calling. Therefore, may we be compassionate people, not harsh, not condemning to the point of where people do not see any love, they do not hear any love.

[10 : 53] Let us be compassionate people because we have received the life of God through our compassionate Lord. None of us deserved it. It is all of grace.

And then let us take heed to the words of St. Paul, who said in the opening words of Philippians chapter 2, Therefore, if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and any mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having that same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness. In lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than himself.

And let each of you look not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Amen.

In the name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.