

# Lent IV

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Date: 15 March 2026

Preacher: Seminarian Matthew Stuart

[ 0 : 00 ] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. In our gospel text this morning, John brings us to the far side of the Sea of Galilee, where a great multitude had followed Jesus because they had seen the signs he performed on those who were diseased.

Then he gives us the detail that frames the whole passage. Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. Now this detail matters.

Passover recalled God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt and the manna by which he fed his people in the wilderness. John wants us to be aware of that background as this unfolds.

When Jesus saw the multitude coming toward him, he said to Philip, Where shall we buy bread that these may eat? Then John adds, But this he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Our Lord already knew. That question was for Philip. Philip answered, Andrew came a little further.

[ 1 : 25 ] Andrew came a little further. There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish.

But what are they among so many? Five barley loaves, which was the bread of the poor, and two small fish. He brought what he found, though he could see how little it was.

Then Jesus said, Make the people sit down. John tells us the men sat down in number of about 5,000. And he is also careful in the way that he describes the distribution.

Verse 11 says, And Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed to them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down, and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted.

The church has always heard those words with Eucharistic ears. And rightly so. This is a sign of who Jesus is.

[ 2 : 34 ] And there was an abundance. Again, as John says, the people received as much as they wanted. When they had eaten their fill, our Lord said, Gather up the fragments that remain so that nothing is lost.

They gathered them up and filled 12 baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves. Nothing that our Lord had blessed was to be treated lightly.

The people saw what Jesus had done and said, This is truly the prophet who has come into the world. They were remembering Moses and the promise in Deuteronomy chapter 18, 15.

Passover was near, and the Lord had fed the people in the wilderness. Yet, they were ready to take him by force and make him king. They showed that they still hadn't understood the sign, the deeper meaning of the miracle.

They wanted a king who would answer an earthly need and establish an earthly kingdom. Our Lord had given them bread, though the sign again pointed towards something much greater.

[ 3 : 46 ] The manna in the wilderness sustained bodily life for a time. It was God's gift, and it was a true gift. Yet, those who ate it still died.

Jesus is the one greater than Moses. The old manna fed the body, but didn't bestow eternal life. John is showing us that the old manna finds its meaning in Christ.

The sign points beyond itself to Christ himself. He is the one that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. In the wilderness of our need, Christ reveals himself as the true bread from heaven, who provides abundantly.

Not earthly bread alone, but the bread of eternal life. That's why the gospel belongs so fittingly to Lent.

We fast from food so that we may remember that man shall not live by bread alone. We learn again that beneath our daily desires, there's a deeper hunger.

[ 4 : 55 ] The soul is hungry for God, and only Christ can satisfy that hunger. So on this fourth Sunday in Lent, also known as Mid-Lent or Refreshment Sunday, the church gives us this gospel as a word of refreshment.

In the midst of our fasting, she sets before us the abundance of Christ. We know Philip's uncertainty well enough, and we know Andrew's hesitation.

We come with so little to offer and with no sufficiency in ourselves. Yet our Lord isn't hindered by our poverty.

He receives what we bring, and by his mercy, he feeds his people. He works with our inadequacy and makes it enough.

This is grace. What our Lord revealed by this miracle by the sea, he gives to his church in holy mystery. He is the paschal lamb and the fulfillment of the Passover.

[ 6 : 02 ] Jesus took bread, gave thanks, and gave it through his disciples. The church hears these words at the altar where he still feeds his people.

So when we draw near to the blessed sacrament this morning, let's do so knowing that Christ doesn't offer a bare reminder of himself.

He truly gives himself through the priestly ministry that has been handed down from the apostles. He feeds us with his true body and his true blood.

And the prayer book teaches us how to come. We do not presume to come to this thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies.

That is what the gospel teaches us this morning. We come because we are hungry. We come because he bids us to come. And we come because he is merciful.

[ 7 : 04 ] So in these remaining weeks of Lent, let us hunger for Christ. Let us draw near to his altar with faith and thanksgiving. And when we come, let us receive with joy the gifts that he gives.

For Christ is the true bread from heaven and he feeds his people. Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Amen.