

Sunday Next

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Date: 20 November 2022

Preacher: Fr. Wade Miller

[0 : 01] This morning we heard the account that we often hear in our yearly lectionary cycle, and that is the story, the account of Jesus multiplying the bread and fish in order to feed a massive crowd.

Our Lord's birth was in a town called Bethlehem, and Bethlehem literally means house of bread. At the very birth of our Lord, we are given a clear depiction of why our Lord came to this earth.

He came to be the eternal bread from heaven who now gives his own life for the life of the world. Throughout our Lord's ministry, bread is a major theme. Why?

Well, because the New Testament reveals that our Lord became flesh. He took upon flesh, and he did this to feed the world with his very own body and blood, because that body and blood gives us life.

He is the bread that has come down from heaven. He is greater than the manna that we read about in the Old Testament that fed the Israelites in the wilderness as they left their former lives as slaves in Egypt.

[1 : 27] Our Lord is not only the provider of bread on our journey, He is the very sustenance, the eternal bread of life, who imparts life and grace by the power of the Holy Spirit.

But there's an observation I want to highlight from our Lord's miracle of multiplying the loaves, and that involves the timing of this miracle, when this event took place.

This miracle takes place as Passover was about to begin. Passover was a week-long celebration, commemorating and participating in that mystical redemptive event that transcends time and space, where the people of God share in the life made possible by our Lord's deliverance of them from the hands of Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

In other words, it was a time of reliving, reliving that great miracle when God passed over the houses of the Israelites who had the blood covering their doorposts.

The people were spared from the death of their firstborn that came upon those who did not have the blood smeared over their house, their doors.

[3 : 00] The Passover celebration was a time when the people ate unleavened bread. And the reason why they did this is they ate in haste, remembering the urgency of fleeing from their captivity and making their way to the promised land.

So this was the high feast for the Israelites. And as they're preparing to celebrate Passover, our Lord does this miraculous thing.

Our Lord does the miracle of feeding many thousands of people, demonstrating that He is the life that sustains us in our journey in this life.

And He is the one who leads us to eternal life, to our promised land, because He is the destination itself. Our Lord is our life.

He is our guide as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death. We read in our gospel text this morning that He ordered the people to sit down in an area where there was much grass, according to John 6, verse 11.

[4 : 16] Our Lord makes us to lie down in green pastures. He leads us beside the still waters. Our Lord is the one who calms the storms. He's the one that parts the seas.

He's the one that brings us through the seas, through baptism. And now we are under His watchful care. And He feeds us with His very own body and blood as we journey together with our eyes fixed on Him in the Holy Eucharist.

And our Lord still feeds us this day. We are brought into His church where the 12 baskets that we read about at the end of our gospel text, where the 12 baskets of leftovers symbolizes the apostolic ministry that continues to this very day.

One can hear the echoes from our earlier Old Testament reading of Jeremiah chapter 3 that calls for us to return to our Lord, who is our bridegroom, and promises us in verse 15, And I will give you shepherds according to my heart, who will feed you.

With knowledge and understanding. Friends, like all generations, we're no different. We live in anxious times.

[5 : 43] And we are living in times that can appear sometimes pointless and very depressing. Just this past week, we heard about the senseless tragedy that took three student-athlete lives at the University of Virginia.

And we will continue to hear of countless other calamities and tragedies throughout the days, the weeks, the months, and the years to come.

That's something you can bet on. But, our comfort is simply this. As baptized Christians, we have passed from death to life.

We have enjoyed our exodus because we have been washed. We have been buried in Christ.

And now we are raised to new life. And despite the raging storms of life, Christ still feeds us and leads us by giving us his very own body and blood.

[6 : 52] And he promises that we will enter into that promised land once our journey in this life is completed.

But until that time, we are called to fix our eyes on Christ, to feed on him, rather than being consumed by the storms that wage against our hearts and minds and that produces anxiety and worry for the masses.

So may we trust in our great God and Savior, Jesus, who is our life, who is our food, as we journey in this life by faith, putting our trust and our hope in him.

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