

Lent IV

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Preacher: Seminarian Ian Jarrells

[0 : 00] May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Since we didn't get a chance to hear the Gospel from Lent, the fourth Sunday in Lent, I'm going to read that for us today. This is the sixth chapter of the Gospel of St. John, beginning in the first verse.

After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. Then a great multitude followed him, because they saw his signs which he performed on those who were diseased. And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.

Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward him, he said to Philip, Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?

But this he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.

[1 : 08] One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many? Then Jesus said, Make the people sit down.

Now there was much grass in the place, so the men sat down, and number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down, and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted.

So when they were filled, he said to his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost. Therefore they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which were left over by those who had eaten.

Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, This is truly the prophet who is to come into the world. The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

In our gospel text, Jesus feeds five thousand men with just two fish, and with five barley loaves of bread. To many people who were there, the only response that they could give was to see Jesus as the prophet who had been prophesied to come to the world.

[2 : 20] The prophet Elijah had also fed a great number of people with just a few loaves of bread. And generations before him, Moses had prophesied that there would be another like him who would bring manna from heaven to feed his people.

But as Christians have continued to reflect upon the actions of Jesus in this miracle, they have noticed something else about what Jesus has done. Jesus was giving a foretaste of something much greater that is to come.

The marriage feast between the Lamb of God and the Church, the Bride of Christ. Why a marriage feast? Doesn't this passage more closely resemble the teaching on the Eucharist?

Well, the short answer to this question is yes. It's talking about both. The feeding of the 5,000 points toward both the life-giving action and the provision of Jesus through the institution of the Eucharist, as well as the wedding that will happen between Jesus Christ and the Church when he returns and he makes all things new.

Needless to say, it will be the best wedding that you've probably ever been a part of. Because in this wedding, the prayer of Jesus in John chapter 17 will be understood more completely.

[3 : 31] We will be one with Christ as he is one with the Father. In love, we will be united with Christ for all of eternity. The Eucharist is our participation in the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus.

In it, we receive the benefits of Christ's death and his resurrection and are made partakers of the divine nature. It is a Thanksgiving meal where we offer up to God the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ time and time again so that the sacrifice of Christ may be a sweet-smelling aroma to God on our behalf.

Just as Christ feeds the 5,000 miraculously, so too we, the whole Church, throughout time and space, are fed by one man. Everyone who ate of the bread which Jesus gave on the mountain was able to eat their fill.

They were satisfied with what they had received. We, too, are able to eat our fill of Christ, continuously being nourished by our God for the days ahead. It is our life, our joy, our sustenance, and our salvation.

Nothing could be greater than this gift that God has given to us, which is his very self. And it doesn't stop there. Even though we see the Eucharist as the greatest gift of God that we can have while we make our pilgrim way through this life, we also have it as a sign of what is to come.

[4 : 57] We live in a culture that only lives for the now. We are trained at an early age to be concerned about this life and to be concerned about this life only. We are told that we need to grind our way through life in order to receive fulfillment.

In a way, our nine-to-five jobs are supposed to provide us with a sense of security and preparation for our future. But what happens when we are not able to do those things anymore?

When our bodies grow older, when our health deteriorates, when our minds are not what they used to be, what then? Sure, we may have a kind of security in our jobs, but what if we lose them?

What if the difficulties of life throw a wrench in our plans? Friends, what has been told to us by our culture our entire life is a lie. We may have a sense of security, of fulfillment, and even salvation through what we do in this life, but when we begin to doubt the security of these things, what is to provide us with solace?

Is it more work? Do we continue the endless cycle that we have entered into in order to escape it, in order to escape the endless questioning of ourselves because of the very thing that is supposed to save us?

[6 : 15] Amid all these questions comes an answer. This answer is not from our culture, but rather from a divine source. The Eucharist provides us with the answers to these troubling questions.

We need not seek endlessly for our security and our safety because we find it in the Eucharist. But isn't the Eucharist something that we partake of now?

What difference is this from all of the other things that we try to seek after now? It is different because the Eucharist also points to the beyond. Remember when Jesus commands the disciples to take up all of the leftover food after feeding the 5,000.

Gather up the fragments that remain so that nothing is lost. Therefore they gathered them up and filled 12 baskets with the fragments of 5 barley loaves, which were left over by those who had eaten them.

The Church has read this from the very beginning eschatologically, or as a reality about the future. This was the prayer of the early Christians when they read this passage.

[7 : 19] As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains, but was brought together and became one, so let thy church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom.

For thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever. At the marriage feast of the Lamb, when Christ is united to his church in blessed matrimony, we will join with Christ and dine with him in his heavenly presence.

The Eucharist provides us with the beginning of that reality now, but it also points towards its complete fulfillment in the end. So each time we come to the Eucharist, let us see it as our sustenance and as a promise, the promise that we will be in complete union with God.

This is our hope and our salvation. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The Eucharist.