

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
Mark 8:1-9

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Mark 8:1-9 In those days, when again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples to him and said to them, ²"I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. ³And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way. And some of them have come from far away." ⁴And his disciples answered him, "How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?" ⁵And he asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" They said, "Seven." ⁶And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and they set them before the crowd. ⁷And they had a few small fish. And having blessed them, he said that these also should be set before them. ⁸And they ate and were satisfied. And they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. ⁹And there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away.

In today's Gospel, we hear about the Feeding of the Four Thousand. Jesus fed 4,000 people with a few fish and seven loaves of bread. The need for feeding all these people came up because they were following Jesus for 3 days and had nothing to eat.

When Jesus arrived in the region of the Decapolis by the Sea of Galilee, it was no longer desolate. It was full of people, most of them who followed Jesus from the region of Tyre and Sidon. Jesus saw these people and He had compassion on them. He saw that the crowds were weary, tired and especially hungry.

In this day and age, it's a simple thing for us to stop off at a fast food restaurant when we are on the road. It's not a big deal. Hunger is not as big an issue today as it was when Jesus fed the 4,000.

Today, it's more difficult for most Americans to see hunger as a result of sin. We live in a land where over eating is the problem, not under eating. Between grocery stores, convenience stores, restaurants, and other food sources, most Americans have more than enough to eat.

Things weren't so simple for those 4,000 people. Back then there were no fast food restaurants. An oven would generally be built out of rocks in the front yard and heated by firewood in order to cook hot food.

Now think of the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were constantly surrounded by food. Out of all the trees in the garden, only one was off limits. Any time they needed to eat, they simply put out a hand and picked something from a nearby plant or tree. It was not until Adam and Eve sinned that gathering and preparing food became a struggle.

It was after Adam and Eve sinned that God said to Adam in **Genesis 3:17-19**: "Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

When Jesus heals the sick, He is undoing the curse of sin. When Jesus feeds the hungry, He is also undoing the curse of sin.

The disciples had seen Jesus perform many miracles—including raising a girl from the dead. They should have believed that Jesus could feed all the people.

The disciples asked "**How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?**", they were lacking in faith and not trusting in Jesus, as they did throughout the 3 years they spent with Jesus.

We seem to have the same problem as the disciples—trusting in Jesus to provide in every circumstance. The sinful flesh tells you time and time again to come up with your own solution, rather than trusting in Jesus to provide for all your needs.

Jesus tells us to repent! For the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.

To repent means to turn from all your sins, and live in God's forgiveness, trusting him with all your heart. Living each day in faith in the works Jesus has done for you—dying on the Cross in your place and 3 days later He victoriously rose from the dead. —forgiving you all your sins.

[Jesus] took the seven loaves and the few fish. **⁵And he asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" They said, "Seven." ⁶And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and they set them before the crowd. ⁷And they had a few small fish. And having blessed them, he said that these also should be set before them.**

And they all ate and were satisfied. In this way, Jesus gave the food to the disciples and they were indeed able to give the people something to eat. In fact, all the people were satisfied.

Jesus provides for all your daily needs each and every day. In the Small Catechism, Luther writes: *Give us this day our daily bread. What does this mean?* God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What is meant by daily bread? Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

God always provides more than you need. He doesn't give you what you want but gives you what you need! We still live with the symptoms of our sin. We still suffer from the effects of sin.

Jesus' compassion and His words and works in today's Gospel teach us that He has the authority and power to deal not just with the symptoms of sin, but He is able to deal with sin itself.

Jesus' compassion and His words and works also comfort those who share His gifts with others. Jesus instructs us to give His gifts to those in need in the world around us. But we have the same response that the disciples had.

Jesus responds the same way to us that He did to the disciples. He still gives HIS gifts to us. We can share His gifts with the people around us and have more left over than when we began.

The greatest blessing that Jesus gives to us is the blessing that comes from His cross ... the forgiveness of sins. With that forgiveness, He gets at the root cause of all our problems. With that forgiveness, He saves us from the eternal punishment of hell. With that forgiveness, He gives us life forever with Him.

Just as Jesus fed the 4,000 through His clueless disciples, He still provides. He gives His gifts to sinners so that they may share them with other sinners. At the beginning of the service, you confess your sins before God and each other.

Then, even though I am just as much a sinner as any of you, by the stead and the command of Christ, I forgive your sins with the forgiveness that comes from Jesus Christ

As I stand here in this pulpit, I am simply one sinner telling other sinners about Christ's salvation. As I consecrate the bread and the wine of the sacrament, I am a sinner who relies on Christ's promise to be present in the bread and wine with His body and blood for the forgiveness of your sins.

Just as the multiplying of the fish and loaves had nothing to do with the disciples who delivered the meal to the crowds, so also the source of forgiveness, life, and salvation has nothing to do with the pastor. Instead, it all depends on Jesus.

As you find yourself stranded and hungry in the desolation of this sin-filled world, know that Jesus has entered this world with sacred food for you. This food is the Gospel of His suffering, death, and resurrection for you.

This Gospel gives you the forgiveness of sins, and with the forgiveness of sins comes life and salvation. Just as He once gave temporal food by the hand of His disciples, He now gives you His sacred food through the mouth and the hand of His servant.

Romans 6:22 ²²But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen