

Seventh Sunday after Trinity 2024  
Mk 8:1-9 (ESV)

At that time, the disciples of Jesus answered Him, “How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?”

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Blessings to all of you, dear ones, on this 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity. You know, that question I just read to you from our Gospel lesson is not one that modern man is used to asking. The question our Lord’s disciples ask Him in the desert wilderness is a rather foreign one for us as Americans in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

There they all were, in our text—thousands upon thousands of them: men, women, and children—out in a place that’s barren and inhospitable—with an insufficient amount of food, for three whole days—there they were *with Jesus*.

And according to the Greek text, the disciples ask: ‘From where will someone be able to feed these [people] here with bread in the desert wilderness?’

From where, they ask, will someone satisfy the hunger of so many with bread?

Dear ones, obviously, in some ways, *our* context and setting here today couldn’t be more different from theirs. And yet, in other ways, if I could be as provocative as I can, it couldn’t be more *alike*.

To satisfy our physical hunger for food, any one of us here today could simply go to Sam’s Club or maybe Costco in Kansas City, if you like, and you can choose from row after row after row of neatly arranged, newly packaged goods for you to eat. Just take a cruise down Wanamaker here in town and you will be spoiled for choice with so many different options to pick from for food.

*And*, to satisfy our hunger for entertainment and the latest information on what’s happening in the world, nowadays we have so much fed into our lives through smartphones at lightning speed. We have news and social media “*feeds*” as they’re called that are constantly replenished and specifically designed so that you *never* reach the end of what’s being fed to you.

So why is it, then, dear ones, that despite being fed with so much, there are still so many people who feel so empty and discontent with life as we know it? Why do so many people still have a gnawing hunger for more, that there’s got to be more to life than what they now have? People today are always, always consuming but never truly satisfied, like the living dead.

But the crowds in our Gospel text, on the other hand—they found themselves ensconced in a desert wilderness, in a place where emptiness and death reign, *and yet* the One in their midst feeding them by the thousands is the Incarnate Son of God, the Source of all life on the earth and not one of their number perished.

And not only that, dear ones, but despite becoming acutely aware of their own desperation—their own gnawing hunger and longing within to be satisfied in the depths of their being—not only were the crowds all reclining and resting in the presence of our Lord as they would at a lavish

banquet, but they also were fed from the Lord's own hand, and they were all filled in body and soul, so that no man, no woman, or child went forth hungry. There was certainly enough—more than enough—for every last one of them to be filled, and then some. And as they consumed what was handed over, they all came to know the true satisfaction that comes only by receiving what is given us from out of the compassionate heart of Jesus, the Savior of the world, and the Living Bread from heaven.

**Dear ones, as it was for the crowds fed by Jesus, so it is for us and for all mankind in this way: that man was *always* meant to be fed and filled and satisfied by receiving from His hand. And those who receive Christ as the very Bread of Life—for all of you who do this, you will be filled—and you will be satisfied even now and unto eternal life.**

Because even from the very beginning, God made man a creature that hungers, one that must look not within, but outside of himself, to the Lord, to receive from Him all that he needs for nourishment and sustenance and for the fulfillment of his deepest longings.

As you heard in our Old Testament lesson, dear ones, it was from out of the depths of His love for man that the Lord God provided a holy garden and great abundance for man to enjoy. Fruits from the earth of staggering variety and color and flavor all for man to enjoy, that he would delight in the Lord who gave such plentiful of food to fill his stomach and nourish his body, and to fill his soul, nourishing it with the consummate love of the Lord our God Who has made us for Himself.

And amid all the abundance of the Garden of Eden, amid all the trees and all the food overflowing for man, there was only one single tree in the midst of the lush garden that God had reserved not for eating, but for another holy use. Only one tree had been united with a word of prohibition by God for the good of man—that tree being a testament to Adam and to us that it is *not* simply by what comes forth naturally from the earth that man will live, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God—all of it coming forth from out of His merciful heart.

And as you well know, after the devil had gone about his unholy work, Adam and Eve acted as though they were in a barren wasteland, as if none of the abundant fruit from the trees in Eden were even there, none except the fruit forbidden them. And they chose to abandon the Word of the Lord and chase after the one kind of food that would never satisfy them but would only leave them empty, given over into death. It was if they were chasing a mirage in the desert.

And now, that's precisely what fallen man does in this fallen world—chase after that which will not nourish or truly satisfy. Dear ones, how often has this characterized your life—chasing after vain, fleeting things that only leave you empty and wanting? How often has this been true for you?

Because in truth, the desert wilderness that we hear of in our Gospel lesson today is an image of what this whole world is theologically—it is a place characterized by emptiness and death. And thus, even if you have food to fill your stomach and entertainment to fill your thoughts each passing day, dear ones, that doesn't change the fact that, like a mirage in the desert, none of it

will satisfy your soul or give you life in God—and nothing ever will except Jesus Christ, the Living Bread from heaven. He is the one food that will do that.

Our Lord says this very thing to the Jews in John ch. 6, “I Am the Bread of Life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger... Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.” But our Savior also adds this: “If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh” (Jn. 6:35, 51).

Dear ones, like the crowds in our text, it’s not by running but by reclining at this festal banquet here in the presence of the Lord that you will know true satisfaction and the life in God we were always meant to live. Because here you receive the bread of Christ’s flesh from His hands, flesh which was given into death for the forgiveness of your sins, and which He gives us here today from out of the abundance of His compassionate heart—and there will be no lack for you.

And so, when the tempter comes trying to get you to chase after and completely devote yourself to other things in the wilderness of this world, like he did in the temptation of our Lord, fortify yourself with prayer offered up in remembrance of Jesus, in remembrance that man will live by every Word that comes forth from His mouth, and by His holy flesh. Only He can fill and satisfy our souls. Let your whole life reflect this fact, dear ones. And today, let us eat and be satisfied in Him.

And to the same Jesus Christ be all the glory now and unto ages of ages. Amen.