

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

“I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord!’ Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!”

This Sunday is a bit of a “Lenten oasis and respite” so to speak. We stop, rest, rejoice, and then move forward to Passiontide which begins next Sunday. In some ways, this is like our lives in Christ as a whole. We go through this life, and we rest in the Lord as we look forward to that day of eternal rest and refreshment. In this way there is a “leisure” to it all in the true sense of the term on this Sunday of the Church Year. As you go through this life you cling to Christ and are at rest. You stop and pause to consider all your God has done for you in this life and still does because Christ has come and done it. Today you see Jesus miraculously feed these people and next week you will hear a confrontation between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. You see this all together because you know where Jesus is heading the end of this Lenten season. You know the cost that has been paid so that your redemption has been won, and you have eternal life. You know it and you have it this very day. So we sit, and listen. We hear the account of our Lord giving to his people working this miracle and give him thanks for what he has done and promises us of what is to come. Jesus is our “Priceless Treasure.”

St. John writes, “After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.” Right before our reading, Jesus teaches about how Moses pointed to him as the promised one, bearing witness through his writings in the Old Testament. The Jews rejected this, as they do still today, and fail to see Jesus as the Messiah. Really then, if this is the mode by which someone is reading the Scriptures by and operating with, that Jesus isn’t the Christ, then nothing of what he does, even working this miracle, makes sense.

Here, then, when our reading picks up, Jesus is beginning what is a long chapter in the Scriptures which contains a great deal of unpacking that Jesus is the one promised, sent by God, and the very Bread of Life come down from heaven to give eternal life to his people. This chapter starts off with a large crowd but the chapter ends up only with a small number, primarily the twelve apostles, and even then, Jesus singles out Judas Iscariot who would betray him.

This all goes to show how ridiculous sin is and how it thinks and lives. Let alone the eternal condemnation that comes upon sin and those who refuse to repent, there is an element in just how absolutely blinded it makes someone when it comes to the things of God. Apart from the Holy Spirit, man can’t know or discern these things of the Scriptures and the person of Christ. That’s part of what it means that the image of God has been lost in the fall into sin. We lack a right knowledge and understanding in these eternal things.

Instead, we’ve replaced this thinking and living directed toward God and eternity with just the here and now and this life now defines everything. The Jews, as one example, wanted temporal deliverance. They wanted someone who would deliver them from the Romans and “make Israel great again.” They also didn’t want to see their sin in its severity, and they didn’t want to see that God’s law is not given for redemption. When Christ came as the fulfillment of Israel and the fulfiller of the law and makes all things new, they hated him. Even when the very writings they were trying to use against Jesus bore witness to him and pointed to everything thing he was saying and doing right before their eyes. They were blinded in their understanding and belief.

A crowd comes then, and Jesus sees them. Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “‘Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?’ He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, ‘Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.’ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, ‘There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?’ Jesus said, ‘Have the people sit down.’”

Testing Philip, Jesus is getting him to look beyond what is before his eyes and see things in light of who is before him. When the eyes see just five loaves of bread and two small fish off course it's going to seem like there is no way that the people can be fed. But when the one who is asking you this is the eternal Son of God, then nothing is impossible and, in fact, you should actually expect him to give and work as he has promised to do. Sin, though, doesn't see Jesus with the eyes of faith, rather it looks simply at the here and now.

What did Jesus do? “Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, ‘Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.’ So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, ‘This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!’”

All four Gospels have this miracle recorded in their accounts. There's something to what Jesus did here working this miracle. The people were fed out of God's abundant, merciful goodness and compassion toward them. He is the Christ and Jesus came into the world to save sinners, to redeem them from sin, death, and the devil. These signs or miracles show forth this work and who he is as the Christ. The apostles would see and acknowledge this later, at the end of John 6, even when others had left and here as Jesus is teaching them what they would later do as his instruments of preaching, teaching, and administering the sacraments after his ascension into heaven. They saw him doing this work and were looking to what is to come.

But the people, the crowd, what did they want? Well, first they did say, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!” This title of “the Prophet” is a messianic title that comes from, you guessed it, Moses who wrote of the Prophet to come after him who was to be greater. Moses did bear witness to Jesus. They said this in their words, they weren't wrong in their confession here, but what did they want? “Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.”

The people were still lacking in their understanding. They wanted to make Jesus King. Here's this guy who can feed us so let's have him as our ruler. Sounds a little familiar doesn't it? We are tempted to think the same. We are tempted to think with our bellies rather than look to Jesus at all times in faith.

What would have happened if the people made him king? What harm would it have done? There's something missing if this would have happened. It would have robbed us of the cross. Jesus was looking ahead to what was to come. He would indeed be the King, the one we need not the one our sinful hearts think we want. The Lord is good and merciful, and he has in mind our salvation even as he provided bread and fish for these people to eat in this place.

Meditating on all of this today look at your lives and see what the Lord says to you through this text. God provides for you; he gives you your daily bread. God calls you to recognize this in all things and give him thanks, serve, and obey him. That's nothing insignificant because lest you forget if it wasn't for God providing for you, you would not have a thing. Everything you have is because of God's mercy toward you in Christ be it how little or great all is out of the gracious hand of God. It's ridiculous when you forget this, see your life apart from God and his care, or simply define your life by the here and now without any regard for the life to come. Pray for God's care, trust that he provides, and give him thanks in your life for all his benefits.

The cross is on the horizon in the reading today and so is the glorious Easter morning. The Passover was hand in the reading, and another Passover, a final Passover would see the Spotless Lamb of God sacrificed on the altar of the cross so that your sin is forgiven. Rejoice this day in Jesus the Bread of Life whose mercy overflows in abundance. Find joy, true joy, in your Lord crucified for you. All that is his is yours every day as you are baptized into Christ. Be glad and go to his house, the church, as he feeds you with the eternal bread of immortality and his eternal saving word.

4th Sunday in Lent—Laetare—March 15, 2026

Jesus is here and invites you to sit down and rest. He has compassion on you. You rest easy in the arms of Jesus as he shows you his mercy and give him thanks for all he has done. Feast at his Supper and be satisfied as your sin is forgiven and he gives you life and salvation. The Bread of Life is yours this day as he has come, has died, and is risen for you. Go home this day and eat your daily bread knowing the Lord is good and the very reason that's on your table is because Jesus has died for you. Jesus is your priceless treasure. Rejoice people of God. Rejoice and be glad this day in the Lord who has done all things well. He fed the multitude by his miraculous work, and he feeds and takes care of you each and day. That's who your Lord and what he does. So, taste and see that he is good. Give him thanks for all he gives to you and as you love your neighbor as his people. Receive this all and look forward to that day when you no longer need daily bread as you will hunger and thirst no more for your body is raised and you will see face to face your Lord, the Bread of Life. On that day there will be eternal rest and rejoicing that knows no limits and no end.

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