

Grace: God's undeserved love for each and every one of us. Mercy: God forgiving us our sin for the sake of His Son, Jesus Christ. And peace: peace of heart, peace of mind, peace with God. All of these are yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us today is found in the Gospel according to Saint John the sixth chapter beginning at the first verse, and we read in Jesus' name:

*After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. <sup>2</sup> Then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased. <sup>3</sup> And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. <sup>4</sup> Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. <sup>5</sup> 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?" <sup>6</sup> But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. <sup>7</sup> Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little." <sup>8</sup> One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, <sup>9</sup> "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?" <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost." <sup>13</sup> 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.* <sup>14</sup> *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."* <sup>15</sup> *Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.*

Heavenly Father, these are Your words and therefore they are the truth. We pray, Lord, that You would increase our faith through them. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

Quick, other than the resurrection, which is the only miracle that is told in all four gospels? The birth of Jesus... nope. Raising Jairus' daughter... nope. Raising of Lazarus... nope. Of all the miracles that Christ performed only two are recorded in

all four gospels: His resurrection and the feeding of the 5,000. This, of course, is not meant to lessen any miracle Christ has done, but it does seem to give a certain credence to what Christ has done for the people in our text today.

People saw Jesus perform miracles and they came out to Him. Jesus wanted to make sure they were provided for and thus He performed another miracle... though His disciples doubted. Wow, doesn't this really sound like so much that happens in our lives? People see the miracles that Christ has done in our lives, we doubt that they are much, and yet more and more miracles of Christ happen.

And it is especially with the miracle before us that we can see just how much God cares about our earthly and physical lives. Jesus could have very easily made the people go in search of their food and well-being, but He

made sure to provide for them. Thus, we can see, that throughout Jesus' ministry and miracles, *Jesus feeds*.

Sure at times He feeds our bodies and at times our faith, but so many of His miracles are based around making people well and helping them. He could have restricted Himself to making the sun stand still or turn on and off; He could have walked around turning water into blood; He could have floated through the air and flew around showing off His great powers; instead, Jesus chose to spend His time feeding us with both His word and with food and drink.

Of course, so often we are just like the disciples in this text. Christ performs a miracle, people begin to follow Him, and Christ wants to make sure they are taken care of... so the disciples try to rein Him in and remind Him that they are rather poor and small. As Philip says, "Two hundred denarii

worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little." It would be equivalent of saying that six months of pay would not feed these people... what do you want us to do? And do we not share these worries at times?

You want to go on a missionary trip... but you can never save the money and never have the time. You want to help support another church in a different city, but you notice that only poor people live there and they won't give too much to the church. You want to provide Bibles and catechisms to every member of the church but you don't know if that is really in the budget. You want to do God's work... but you have to make sure that you have enough money.

Now, please do not misunderstand, there is a huge difference between good stewardship and foolishly wasting money. Had the disciples known that there would one day be

5,000 people coming for dinner they probably would've prepared for it... but when something does come up, notice how quick they are to turn the people away. In the other Gospel accounts the disciples are quick to tell Jesus to send them to cities nearby to get food because they don't have the money, they don't have the means to help them.

And yet, Jesus does not seem to care how much money is available. Jesus knows the financial situation and still He brings this blessing onto His disciples to test them. Yes, as our text tells us, Jesus asks the disciples how they will feed the people to test them... and the disciples immediately turn to the earthly things and what they have, but they do not immediately turn to God and don't we do this also? God I want to help, but then I won't have this... God I want to give, but then I will lack my new toy... God I want Your church to thrive and flourish, but I don't want to rely on You to do it.

And, also, like the disciples we are quick to point out how little there is. Jesus, there are five loaves and two fish, how are You going to feed everyone? God we are a small church, we could never have a school. God we are few people, we could never add on. God we are so small we could never do anything for so great a number of people. And we do not rely on Him and what He has provided, instead we let our fears, our doubts, and our concerns get in His way.

And thanks be to God that Jesus Christ did not do this. Jesus knew what was happening and how He was going to handle the situation, but He wanted His disciples to trust in Him and lean on Him all the more.

And that is how it is with our sin also. Jesus knows what He is going to do, in fact, Jesus has already accomplished it and now He wants us to rely on Him and not on

ourselves. Jesus came into this world to live a perfect life and die an innocent death to assure you of the forgiveness of your sins. Jesus rose from the dead three days later to proclaim that His life and death were sufficient for all sin of all people of all time. Jesus promises us that He has done everything for our salvation... and still we can doubt Him.

However, thanks be to God that He has given us our faith in Jesus Christ, and now Christ also gives us the strengthening of our faith that only He can provide. He gives us a strong faith, whenever we get weak. He helps us because He knows that we cannot do it alone. He strengthens us in Himself and in all that He has done, never asking us to help or to turn to ourselves but to rely completely on Him.

In helping us Christ has given us His word which He sends to the ends of the earth so that all people can hear it. Left to ourselves

we would have innumerable reasons why we can't leave Omro, yet Jesus makes sure that His word gets to all people.

In helping us, Christ gives us baptism in which God puts a new heart within us so that we are now His children and we desire to do His will. God strengthens us through our baptism when we think back to it daily and know that when we are baptized we are baptized into Christ's death. He does not point us to ourselves and what we have or can do, but He points us back to Himself.

And just like those who were gathered with Jesus on this day, Jesus also feeds us. In His Holy Supper He feeds us spiritually and physically. He gives us His very body and blood to eat in the bread and wine and thus fills us... but He also promises us the forgiveness of sins when we partake of this meal and so fills our spirits. Jesus has done all of this for us and has given us His means

of grace because He knows how quickly and easily we can become distracted. He wants us to know that He is indeed the one who is feeding us.

And just like He did for the people that day, so He also uses His disciples to this very day to 'distribute' His food to the people. He uses pastors and missionaries to take His word to all people, and He also uses you. He uses all of His disciples to take His love, His grace, His word, His message to all of His children.

Dear friends in Christ, do not rely on yourselves and all that you have and have done in order to know that Christ is working... Jesus is working constantly and praise God that He chooses to use us to help get His word and His message out to His faithful children. Though at times we do doubt and we worry and we fear and we think of only earthly things, Christ knows

what is going to happen, He knows that everything He asks us to do He will prosper and He will accomplish it. So we need not rely on ourselves or on our possessions, but rely on Christ and know that He will always provide.

Thanks be to God that He calms my fears and my worries. Thanks be to God that I do not need to rely on myself, but I can rely on Him for all that I need. And thanks be to God that through His word and His sacraments Christ continues to feed all of His children.

Thanks be to God. Amen.