

Text: Matthew 14:13-22

Theme: You give them something to eat

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation today is the Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew, the fourteenth chapter verses thirteen through twenty-two.

Boys and girls, I pray that you are well today. Did you eat breakfast today? Was it good or did your stomach still rumble afterwards? It rumbled? Really! You must be growing. We should get you some more food. Do you think we would have enough to feed everyone here? If we do not have enough to feed everyone here, how can we feed over five thousand people? Impossible, maybe, but that is what Jesus does using only five loaves and two fish. He commands the disciples to give the people something to eat. How can they do so? How can we still do so today? Ponder those questions as you hear the rest of the sermon. You may go back to your seats and those who love you.

The need for food in our society

It is interesting in our world today the staggering amount of food that we have right alongside hunger and starvation. Using the most recent data available, food production has increased steadily each year across the board. In 2020, crop production has increased to 3.2 billion tons. In 2019, world meat production reached 337 million tons. Even egg production has increased! In 2019 it was 83 million tons. Truly God has blessed us massively in the world today by providing the fruits of the earth for our daily bread, for both us as well as for the world.

Yet right alongside that massive production, is hunger and starvation. In 2020, almost 770 million people were undernourished. According to the non-profit Action Against Hunger, 14 million children currently suffer from Severe Acute Malnutrition. 45% of child deaths worldwide are due to hunger and related causes. As one mother of seven in Madagascar puts it, "Today, we made dried tamarind. You crush the tamarind until it's a sticky paste. Then you add ash and cook it. We'll eat it this evening. It's not healthy at all, but at least we have something warm in our bellies."

Something warm in the belly, I am sure none of us could imagine eating tamarind paste with ash for dinner. The need for feeding others is great. Often times in the midst of such tragedy our response is the same as the disciples. The crowd came to them and what do they say? "Send them away." How often have we said likewise? Our resources are too small, our budget will not allow this. We are not able to feed all of these people so let them fend for themselves. How can I help them and their five kids when I can barely feed my own? Our sinful natures strike out at our neighbor. Instead of helping their bodily needs, we seek to keep what we have for ourselves. "I only have a little bit. Surely, I am not called to give it up. I should keep it for myself and my wants. God does not need my little bit, someone else can surely give more and help out. The problem is too massive for little old me to solve. I cannot even make a dent so I will not even

try.” We have eyes only for what *we* can do. We want to keep what we have for ourselves. Our wants, our needs, our desires.

We are blessed to be a blessing to others

In the midst of extreme hunger, notice the compassion of our Lord, what does our Lord say? “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.” How often have you viewed the horror of starvation and thought, or even said, “Why does not God do something?” Yes, indeed, why does not God do something? The disciples balk. Feed five thousand people in a desolate place with only five loaves of bread and two fish?! It’s impossible it cannot be done! Under their own and our own power, it cannot. Yet, it was done. “Everyone ate until they were full satisfied.” Everyone ate and ate in abundance until they could not take another bite. How can this be? Solely because of the provision of the Lord. Jesus takes the bread and fish, blesses them, then using the disciples gives provision and food to the people. The significance of this miracle was intended primarily for the disciples. Thus, why it is the only miracle to be recorded in all four Gospels. Jesus was illustrating the kind of ministry they would have after His departure. They would be involved in feeding people, but with spiritual food. The source for their feeding would be the Lord Himself. When their supply ran out, as with the bread and fish, they would need to return to the Lord for more. He would supply them, but the feeding would be done through them. The disciples feed the people with the glorious news of the Gospel, that Jesus is not just a bread king for their bodies, but for their souls as well. By His suffering, death, and resurrection from the dead, all of their sins are washed away by His precious blood and they are reconciled back to God once again.¹

The same still today. Just as the Lord used the disciples so too, He uses us. We are God’s only instrument in this world. Our Lord blesses us with the fruits of the earth. We ourselves do nothing to cause it. We merely take what the Lord gives and distributes it to our neighbor in order to meet their bodily needs. For one such example, we gather school supplies for Foothills this month to meet the needs of our younger neighbors in their education. We are blessed in order to be a blessing to others. Using the gifts that the Lord gives to us, we meet needs of those around us in both body and soul, physically as well as spiritually. Thus, we feed them with the food God provides, earthly bread as well as the heavenly bread of life come down from heaven.

Not perfect, constantly return to the Lord and His mercy and grace

We are not perfect in doing this activity. Alas, we still live in a sin-filled world. Poverty, hunger, and starvation remain. We still have our sinful nature. We still battle with keeping what the Lord gives us for our own selfish gains. Thus, why we, like the disciples, return to the Lord for more. We return here, gathered in worship in spirit and in truth, to receive the forgiveness of every single one of our sins by the blessed Words of Absolution, to see and remember our own washing of Water and the Word in Holy Baptism, to receive with our lips the very Bread of Life, our Lord’s true Body and true Blood, in, with, and under, the bread and the wine of the Holy

¹ Barbieri, L. A., Jr. (1985). [Matthew](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 54). Victor Books.

Eucharist. Thus forgiven and empowered by our Lord, we go forth into the world that we may meet the needs of those around us, whether in body or in soul, to sharing with them the love that Christ Jesus has shown to us. We do this, not under our own power, but because God uses us as instruments To help someone in need, So we must trust Him to supply When following His lead.
—Sper

God grant that we may indeed, deny our sinful natures, and always strive, in His forgiveness and strength, to meet these needs as He has graciously blessed us so to do.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.