

Sermon for The Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Date: July 18, 2021

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Jeremiah 23:1–6

Epistle Reading: Ephesians 2:11–22

Gospel Reading: Mark 6:30–44

Sermon Text: Mark 6:30–44

Sermon Title: God Is Faithful



Introit: Psalm 23:2-6; Antiphon: Psalm 23:1

Hymns:

LSB 843 – Forgive Our Sin as We Forgive

LSB 644 – The Church's One Foundation

LSB 594 – God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It

LSB 629 – What is This Bread

LSB 575 – My Hope is Built on Nothing Less

Liturgy:

Divine Service IV, p. 203



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Text: Mark 6:30–44

The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things.

And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.”

But he answered them, “You give them something to eat.”

And they said to him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?”

And he said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go and see.”

And when they had found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.”

Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.

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Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

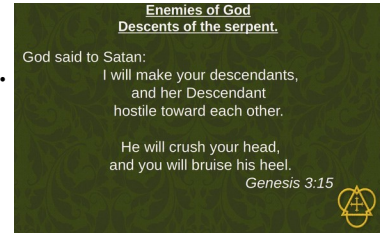
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Grace, mercy, and peace to you in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

Each week we come here and take our place, with the 5,000, receiving the feeding from our Lord. We sit at His feet, hear His Word, and learned from Him. He feeds us, with food far greater than there was that day He saw the crowds and had compassion on them. He feeds us not with five loaves and two fish, but with His very precious, and truly present, Body and Blood. Food for the body, food for the soul, food for faith. Food that comes with the promise of forgiveness to repentant sinners.

Just like the crowd that day, we learn. This is what we learn. We learn first who we are: sinners. Enemies of God. Descendants of the serpent.¹ Soiled and stained with sin and no hope of eternal life. We are, as Luther said, "spiritual maggot sacks." We are ugly, infected, and spiritually dead.



We also learn who our Lord is. He is our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier (or holy-ifier). We learn He loves us "maggot sacks." We learn Jesus laid down His life for us, and we have been saved by His Holy Body and Blood. We learn Jesus reconciles us to the Father, and make us holy through the forgiveness of our sins. We learn that in Jesus we have a gracious, loving and merciful Father, and have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit, who guides and leads us, through repentance to reconciliation with God our Father.



We learn from Jesus' how to speak to Him in prayer, including the prayer given to us by Him, to pray by Him. We pray "Our Father" because we are Baptized children of God, no longer children of the serpent. We are born again, born from above, by water and the Word.

We learn this Holy Baptism is not a past thing, resigned to the photo albums and reminiscence, but is an always present, always working, ever ongoing reality. It is not, "I was Baptized." It is "I am Baptized!" We live daily drown that old Adam, and rising to life again with the forgiveness that pours over us from that font and never stops.

The voice of Holy Absolution calls us back to the day of our Baptism, to receive right now what was promised then. It is imperative that we lean on, and cherish, the precious gift of



¹ Genesis 3:15

Confession, which is a gift we need not fear. It is a gift in which we can live without fear of our sins and failures.

Because Jesus has brought us, holy and pure, before the throne of God, we can confess confidently knowing the words we will hear back are not ones of judgment or condemnation, but Words of love. God never says, “I told you so!” God’s Words say sins are forgiven. These words, spoken to you by this humble servant of Christ, servant of the Word, are just as valid, and just as certain, as if Jesus Christ our Lord spoke them Himself.



We learn that all of this leads us to come and stand before this Holy altar, this Table of the Lord, to be fed by Him.

We learn, each week. Not perfectly, to be sure. Our learning has taught us much, but it has not taught us enough, until it has taught us how much we don’t know. That’s important enough that I want to make sure you hear it. Our learning has taught us much, but it has not taught us enough, until it has taught us how much we don’t know.

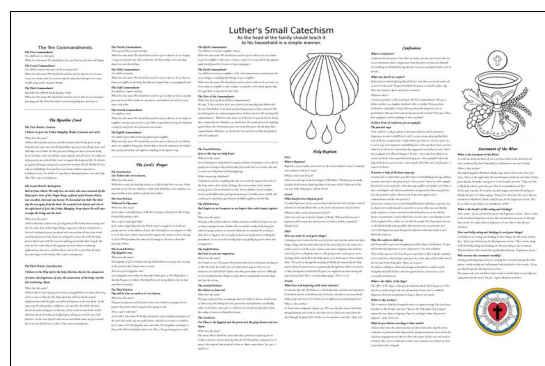
In my previous career I would have people apply to work on my team who liked to think they knew all there was to know. They didn’t get to work on my team. The people with whom I worked knew they didn’t know it all. They had much yet to learn.

In my sphere of experience I was often the most experienced theologian present. I was, so often: at work, with friends, and at church, asked to teach Bible studies and other things. People, Christian and not, would ask me what the Bible says about this thing or that thing.

When I went to the Seminary I passed the entrance exams first try, and pretty well. Then I met some of the professors. I learned ever so quickly how little I knew, how little I know. We talked about that last week in Bible study. Some of those who are teaching there have such a trove of wisdom and insight.

Now coming up on twelve years of daily work in the Scriptures and our Confessions I still have so much yet to learn. Don’t we all? So much yet to learn.

That is the wonder of the Bible. It is so simple a child can confess it sacred truths. Yet a professional theologian, like those present with us today, can dig, and dig deep, and never find the bottom.



We learn, each week. Not perfectly, to be sure. Our learning has taught us much, but it has not taught us enough, until it has taught us how much we don't know.

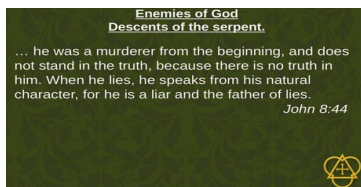
Luther wrote the Small Catechism to be used as a tool in the house daily. It's original form was a poster that could be placed on the wall. It was designed to be learned and relearned everyday throughout your life. A constant learning, a constant feeding, a constant reminder, because we have a constant enemy, seeking to rob us of this precious treasure that comes on the wings of confession. This treasure of forgiveness, through our Savior Jesus Christ.

It is often not easy. To stand before a people and admit we are weak, admit Satan got us, admit we failed, admit that I failed you. Those you saw confess today struggled with that. So did I. You know what we did? We went to God's Word, we doubled and more our daily devotions and our prayers increased substantially, privately and together. We dove into our Christian faith. Are we not holy!!?

Did you hear the sick satanic seduction to sin in those words? God's Word has not taught us enough until it has taught us how much we don't know. Those words are justifying sin. Those words would suggest that some sin is okay, as long as it is done for the right reason.

Justifying sin in Satan-speak. It is confirming you are a decedent of the serpent. It is speaking his words, and his words are always lies. When you lie you are speaking his language, and proclaiming yourself his child, not God's.

Jesus said of him:



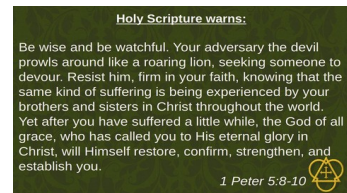
... he was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks from his natural character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.²

We're going to hear more about that next week. The twelve disciples had learned much from the Jesus. They were there when Jesus was teaching the crowd. They were not only eye-witnesses they were "hand-witnesses." By their own hand they passed out the bread and fish which would not have been enough for them, and yet fed the multitude. So close to Jesus. So close to our Savior, not just every week, but everyday. Yet not just a few hours later, their faith would fail. We may be tempted to look down on them, until we look at the "maggot sack" in the mirror.

2 John 8:44

The Catechism, and the Holy Sacred Scriptures to which it points, are precious treasures. Your Confirmation isn't graduation. It doesn't mean you're done. Your faith will be challenged. Satan will come for you. That is why we are charged:

Be wise and be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith...³



Your very presence here today is you putting a big target on your back for which Satan takes aim. He is not going to throw up his hands. He is not going to wave the white flag and admit defeat. Quite the contrary, your presence here means he is going to increase the intensity of his attacks on you. He hates you. He hates your faith. He hates your confession. He hates God's Word. He hates the Sacraments we have been given. He hates you, because you are a child of God. You can bet he is going to use every weapon at his disposal to come for you.

If you try to face him on your own, you are going down, but we are not on our own. We are Baptized into Christ. Our foundation is Jesus Christ our Lord. So when weakness strikes, He is your Warrior. When you fall, He is your forgiveness. When you struggle, He is your Savior. When you are attacked, He is your Advocate.

You have a big target on you, but you have an even bigger Savior around you, and in you, and for you. You have His promises, signed and sealed on the cross, and delivered in an empty grave. We can be confident He is with us. We heard Jeremiah say so. He said, you have a Shepherd, a good one; one who will not let you down. His name is: the Lord our righteousness. Messiah has come and His name is Jesus.

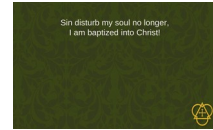
With that in mind let me remind you of one more thing about your Confirmation, be it months ago or years ago. On that day you proclaimed you believe this faith is so precious, and so important, that you would rather die than deny it or fall from it. That was a mighty bold promise you made. One we too often, too easily, forget.

That too is Satan's subtle lie. "They were just words. Those words don't mean anything. I was just a kid." Do not be deceived. That is exactly what Satan wants you to think. To think the real world is different. Five loaves and two fish, or a taste of bread and sip of wine, they aren't enough.

Remember we have Jesus. Jesus make it enough. Jesus makes it more than we need.

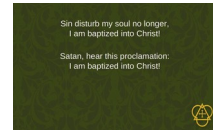
Say it boldly, say it proudly:

Sin disturb my soul no longer,
I am baptized into Christ!⁴



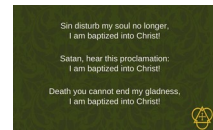
Hold up Christ crucified against the threats and assaults of Satan, and sing out

Satan, hear this proclamation:
I am baptized into Christ!⁵



Hold up Christ crucified against even death and all the weapons of this world, and proclaim:

Death you cannot end my gladness,
I am baptized into Christ!⁶



When you say these things you not alone. We, the repentant and faithful, say it together. We stand together with the whole Holy Christian Church that spans countries and continents. We stand with the angels and the archangels and all the company of heaven. Jesus is faithful to them. Jesus is faithful to you. The power of a Holy God defends you, strengthens you, and comes to you on the wings of repentance.



Without repentance there is no forgiveness and Heaven's gates are locked to you. Let the Church's Office of the Keys open those gates to you. Confess your sins and there find peace.

Altar calls are a rare thing among Lutherans, but they can be profitable for faith, when used the right way, at the proper time. Now is that time. After our next hymn you too can come, as your spiritual leaders have given an example. Come to this altar to confess and be forgiven. Now is that time.

Amen.

**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**



4 LSB 594 – God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It, v.2
5 LSB 594 – God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It, v.3
6 LSB 594 – God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It, v.4