

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Isaiah writes “Surely your salvation is coming; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.” Seven centuries before the Holy Incarnation and miraculous birth of the Savior of the Nations, Isaiah promises His coming. He promises that with the Coming Messiah there is a reward, a reward brought to fruition by Salvific Work only the Savior can do. And by that Work, the Prophet foretells, will God’s chosen people be reconciled to their Maker.

That reconciliation would come, Isaiah promises, by redemption, by the lost and confused and fallen being purchased, won, saved from their fallen condition, and restored to holiness. Only by the work of the Messiah would they be called “The Holy People”, “The Redeemed of the Lord.” So faith waited. Faith watched. Faith never grew weary. Faith looked daily for the Redeeming Work of the Savior, the signs that the Promised Deliverer had come. For by His Work would they receive the Reward He alone could give.

The four thousand gathered on the mountainside had a fleeting taste of that reward and of that work. You heard the testimony of St. Mark this morning. St. Matthew too testifies. He records that “...great multitudes came to Him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them.” Surely this was the sign the Prophet promised! They saw His work. The Savior had come.

“So the multitude marveled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.” For three days the Lord taught them and worked miracles, the miracles proving that His Word is Divine, the three days pointing to the greatest miracle of all - that was to come.

So the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fish was a sign that the City Not Forsaken was being established. He had compassion on the multitude. But when they had eaten He did not command them to follow Him. He sent them away. Among fallen men, satisfaction is fleeting. For many, they saw a good show, their bellies were filled, and that was enough. Bread perishes. So do men. Those fed by the miraculous bread would soon hunger again. And they would go the way of all flesh.

But among that multitude were those who heard and believed. They are those who truly ate. They are the ones the Prophet calls “those Sought Out”. For daily bread is the gift of God. But God gives better Gifts. As the Apostle writes, the Gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Those who heard and believed ate different Bread. They ate the Bread of Life. Their salvation had come. Their reward was with Him. By His Work would He redeem them.

Thanks be to God. As we hear of our Lord’s miracles, we join the multitudes in glorifying God. We glorify God for His mercy shown to them, for His grace in humbling Himself to be born of the Virgin, for His taking on Flesh to redeem flesh. We glorify God because we know that we have been like that multitude.

The Apostle writes of our condition when he says “you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness.” And we know by the Scriptures

what the penalty for our sin is: “the end of those things is death.” For our sins we have deserved nothing more than to be sent away by God, separated from Him forever.

But as that multitude thronged on the mountainside, the Lord “...called His disciples to Himself and said, ‘I have compassion on the multitude...’” He showed them His compassion by preaching the Saving Word of God to them. He showed them His compassion by performing miracles among them. And He showed them His compassion by giving them their daily bread.

He has done the same for you. He shows you His compassion by performing miracles that you see – the sun daily rises, the rain nourishes the grass of the field, your heart beats, you draw breath, flowers bloom, rivers flow, fish, fowl and beast fill the earth, the heavenly luminaries shine, the seasons change, babies are conceived and born, the sick are healed, the creation is sustained, sinners repent, they are forgiven, and men are converted.

Surely the God who made and sustains all things is worthy of all glory and praise. For He is the God that healed the lame, the blind, the mute, the maimed and many others on the Galilean mountain. He is the God that multiplied the loaves and fish for that miraculous meal.

And He is the God that gave His life for you. After the miraculous meal, He sent them away. What He had to do, He had to do alone. He alone could pay the price for the sins of all men of all time. He had to be arrested. He had to suffer the scourge, the blasphemies and mocking, and the cross. He had to go the way promised of old. He had to do the Work that was before Him. He had to shed His Blood, for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

The Right Hand of the Lord, the Arm of His Strength, had to be weak and humbled. He had to die for the sins of the world. He had to climb another mountain, not the mountain of the miraculous feeding, but the mountain called Calvary, where He would know thirst. There He was lifted up as a sanguine banner for the peoples.

He prepared the way for the people by filling the tomb and then emptying it. By His death and resurrection He built the promised Highway: He opened to you the road to heaven. He went through the gates of death, that the gates of Paradise be flung open for you. And as the Prophet promised, His reward is with Him. If you hear and believe that what He did He did for you, the forgiveness and life that He won is made yours, by grace, through faith in Him.

So come to the Christ that provides this Miraculous Meal, the Holy Eucharist, His Body and Blood for you Christians to eat and drink. Come, kneel and believe, for by Paten and Chalice surely your Salvation is coming; behold, His reward is with Him. His reward is for you. Eating and drinking, receiving Christ, it is you who are the Holy People, the Redeemed of the LORD; and you who are called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken, the True Israel, for whom God prepares the new Jerusalem, the new creation.”

In Christ you have been freed from the slavery of sin and transgression. And now, having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, which is true freedom, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus Our Lord.

St. Mark 8:1-9

The Seventh Sunday after Trinity / Eighth Sunday after Pentecost, 2020 A. ✠ D.

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