

Mount Olive Lutheran Church
Sermon for Sunday, August 2, 2009
Rev. Daniel Burhop, Vacancy Pastor

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

“Give me greater love for You, and my faith and hope renew; in Your birth, Your life and passion; in Your death, and resurrection.”

What a prayer that is that we just prayed in that hymn! “Give me greater love for You.” Love for the One Who has done everything for you. His birth, His life, His passion, His death, His resurrection. All of that...was for you. For you He came and was born in Bethlehem, in that “House of Bread”. For you He lived His life perfectly, sinless, as true God and true Man in One. For you, He suffered His passion. His obsessive, driven love that drove Him to the Cross, where for you, He died your death. Becoming your very sin on the Cross, paying that ransom, atoning for your life. And then, for you, He rose and He conquered death and He conquered Satan and He conquered hell and He conquered sin. All of this entirely...for you.

And we pray, “Give us greater love for you. Renew our faith and our hope in that birth that life, that passion, that death and that resurrection.” Because it all was...for you.

It was also all *because* of you. Because of your sin, because of your iniquity, Jesus came down and took on flesh and did all of this for you. Because you cannot save yourself, you cannot do the works of God, you cannot atone for all of your mistakes and all of your sin. And the very fact that sin corrupts you and rots you to your core...because of that, He comes for you.

For you, who grumble like Israel. For you who seek the wrong kind of bread like the people in the Gospel reading today. It’s really amazing to think of these people, to think of the people of Israel. They’d just been in slavery in Egypt, and God comes and He rescues them. He sends Moses and all of these plagues, and the Passover and then He parts the Red Sea. And it’s right after this - after the parting of the Red Sea and after He makes bitter waters into sweet waters that they can drink - that they grumble, and they get ornery and complain against Him because, well...He hasn’t done enough. They’re hungry! It would’ve been better for them to stay in Egypt and die. Because at least in Egypt, they had some food.

That’s how corrupt they were. That’s how corrupt we are as well. Think of the people in the Gospel lesson. Jesus feeds over 5,000 men, women and children with this little bit of bread and fish and this wonderful miracle. And they don’t care a thing about the sign of what that was actually pointing to. They care about the food. They seek after Him because He gave them bread, not because they saw the signs that pointed to Him as the

Messiah, as the One who had come for them, to save them, to rescue them. They came for the wrong reasons.

Which is much like us. We grumble at the gifts that God has given to us. We grumble because we have our minds on the wrong things, on the things that spoil, on the things that we deem as necessities to our life when He gives us so much more greater gifts. Think about that.

He gives us all these wonderful gifts, He gives them to us...for us. But we grumble and we complain. But that's why He comes. He comes for you who grumble, you who complain, you who seek the wrong kind of bread, you who want Jesus to be made in *your* image, the way that you would want Him to be, rather than the way that He is. You who want the church made in your image, rather than in the way it should be - in the image of Christ. You are the ones for whom Jesus comes. You are the ones for whom He comes and gives His good gifts. He hears your grumbling and He answers it as if it were a prayer.

The Lord took bread, and He gave it, saying "This is for you," and Bread came down from Heaven and fed Israel. They were reminded of His glory by that feeding. He heard their grumbling as if it was a prayer, and instead of getting ticked off at them for grumbling against Him, He feeds them, and He does this for them.

The Lord took bread and He gave it, and He gave thanks and He fed over 5,000 people and they were all satisfied and ate their fill. But they were only satisfied for a little bit. They come seeking more, which is what we always do. God gives us a blessing, but we want more. God gives us our place in life, but we want something better. And so He comes for you.

We prayed in the Psalm, "The eyes of all look to You and You give them their food in due season." And God certainly does that. He gives us our daily bread, He gives us all that we need to sustain our life. But we get frustrated, and we want to look for different food. The 5,000 come looking for more, not looking for what Jesus truly gave them that day, which is a glimpse into who He was as the Messiah, as their God who cares for them.

They come and they want more and He tells them, "Don't look for what you were seeking. Don't look for the bread that spoils. There is something even better! There is living Bread that God gives you from heaven."

And they say, "Well that sounds great! Tell us about it! We want *that* bread then. How do we get it?"

And He tells them it's already theirs. He's already there. He's already in their presence. "I AM the bread of life! Whoever comes to Me shall not hunger. Whoever believes in Me shall never thirst."

"Simply receive that gift," is what He's telling them. It's already theirs. Just do not *reject* it! But no, they want more. They want to know, "No, what must *we* do to do the

works of God?" And that's what we always ask. We have to be doing something more because we're not getting exactly what we want.

And to that, Jesus says, "You already have everything you need. You already have forgiveness. You have nothing else that you need to do. There is no other work. The work of God is this: Believe." And it's not your work, but it's the work of God. Even the one thing He says to do, to believe, is something that God gives to us - that faith that we don't attain for ourselves but that He puts into us with his Word, with His Sacraments, with Baptism, with the Lord's Supper. All of that, for you.

The only thing you can do is reject it. To say, "No, that's not good enough. That's not what I want, I don't want that forgiveness." But even when we say we don't want it, it's already paid for. All of our sins, the sins of the entire world, have been paid for on the Cross. Because that is where God truly comes for you. That is where He who had no sin is made to be sin for you so that you can be the righteousness of God. And then He gives you His gifts.

He took bread. He gave thanks. He broke it and gave it to them saying, "This is my Body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also after the supper, He took the cup saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my Blood which is poured out for you."

That gift of the Cross is given to us in the Lord's Supper. After His resurrection and His ascension into heaven - at Pentecost when Peter is sitting there and the Holy Spirit comes. And Peter preaches his wonderful sermon, he says, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you...and your children. And for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord our God will call."

All of these things, all of these gifts are yours because God is a God who is for you. He comes to you, He gives to you apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to equip you for the work of ministry, for the building up of the Body of Christ. He gives you baptism, He gives you the Lord's Supper, He gives you his very flesh and blood, He gives you that living Bread that is from heaven, that does not rot, that does not spoil, that brings you forgiveness. That's all for you.

It's for you, the grumbling, the one who is seeking the wrong thing. He answers your grumbles as if they were a prayer and He gives you what you truly need. He guides you into His blessings, and He does it all...for you.

"Give me greater love for you," we pray. "My faith and hope renew in your birth, in your life and passion, in your death and resurrection."

And now may this peace of God which surpasses all of our understanding, may it keep and guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.