

SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER¹

The Seventh Sunday after Trinity²

Lessons:³

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the fourteenth Verse of the seventh Chapter of Micah.⁴

“Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan [**BAY-shan**] and Gilead, as in the days of old. According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew [**SHOW**] unto him marvellous things.

“The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf. They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of thee. Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the eighth Chapter of the Gospel according to St. Mark.⁵

“In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith [**SETH**] unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far. And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. And he com-

manded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.

“And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha [***dal-muh-NYOO-thuh***]. And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith [**SETH**], Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.

“Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf. And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread. And when Jesus knew it, he saith [**SETH**] unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven. And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Homily:

In the Second Lesson for today, we see that the people in the wilderness could not feed themselves. In the miracle of the loaves and fishes, in which the Lord once again fulfills the prophecy from Deuteronomy of the prophet like unto Moses, we are taught that He meets our greatest need. The truth is, we all need the food of eternal life, because we cannot keep ourselves alive. The bread they ate

that day was miraculous, like the manna in the wilderness that fed the children of Israel for forty years.

How could we read of the food He gave them in the wilderness, the desert wilderness in fact, and not think of the food of eternal life that He gives us? Indeed, when St. John recalls the miracle, He lets us know that the Lord used this miracle to teach that He Himself is the Bread of Life, and that to live forever we must eat His flesh and drink His blood. Such talk was a scandal to many of the people, and they never walked with Him again.

It may seem as if they turned from Him because the idea sounded crazy—and yet, they had to know that He spoke of a spiritual reality. He was telling them that their truest and deepest need is for Him, the One Who is God revealed in our own nature. He took our limited human nature into His unlimited Person, our finite nature into His infinite Being, our time into His eternity, our weakness into His strength, and our death into His life. Indeed, we must feed on Him in order to live. Christ Himself, as the Lord God Almighty—one with the Father and the Holy Spirit—tells us “*I AM* the provision that meets your greatest need. You must feed on Me and live forever.” So we have this Blessed Sacrament, the wonderful mystery of the food and drink of eternal life. We feed on Him in this sacrament; and we feed on Him by His Word.

Today’s scriptures are about our salvation. What does our Catechism tell us? It tells us that two of the sacraments are “generally necessary for salvation.” Five sacraments appear in the Old Testament (as I can quite easily demonstrate), but the sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Communion of our Lord’s Supper are sacraments that impart life eternal and that have been established by Christ Himself when He walked this earth.⁶ We can speak of the Law of commandments, but St. Paul tells us that, as holy and good as the Law is, we need grace in order to live the life that is given in Christ.

You were given the new birth from death into life by Baptism, having become a new creation in Christ Jesus. And now you must feed on the Lord Jesus Christ who meets your greatest need in this our wilderness of sin and death, and by feeding on Him in faith live forever. In every way you have been given every gift

you need to rise above sin and death, to be saved from sin and death, to enter into life, and to have life enter into you. You are *in Christ*, and you receive Him as the food and drink of eternal life. That is grace. That is power.

As you hear His word feed on Him by believing. When you come forward this day toward the altar to receive the Blessed Sacrament, feed on Him by taking Him into your very mouth; and so also feed on Him in your hearts by faith and with thanksgiving.

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The Rev'd Robert Hart⁷
July 22, 2012

¹ “Any set of Psalms and Lessons appointed for the evening of any day may be read at the morning service, and any set of morning Psalms and Lessons may be read in the evening.” *Concerning the Service of the Church*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER viii (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

² This sermon was originally written on the Gospel for Holy Communion on the Seventh Sunday after Trinity, 2013.

³ *Psalms and Lessons for the Christian Year* (1943), THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxix (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

⁴ Micah 7:14-end (KJV).

⁵ St. Mark 8:1-21 (KJV).

⁶ “[S]acraments of the Gospel”, Article XXV, *The Articles of Religion*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER 607 (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

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