Filled by the Compassionate Christ

Trinity 7 T Mark 8:1-9

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The Malagasy Lutheran Church is a partner church of the LCMS located in Madagascar.

If you’re unfamiliar, Madagascar is an island located northeast of the Eastern side of South Africa.

Our district, the mid-south district of the LCMS,

Has helped support the Gospel outreach to this church group in Madagascar for quite some time.

Now, Madagascar is just slightly smaller than the state of Texas.

In the United States, we have around 1.8 million LCMS Lutherans.

Guess how many Madagascar has? In a country about the size of Texas?

4 million.

They dwarf the size of the United States geographically,

But there are twice as many Lutherans, then here.

People there are hungry to hear the Word of God.

Currently, there are portions of the country suffering drought.

That drought is severely affecting members of the Malagasy Lutheran Church.

But I’ve heard stories about how hungry these people in Madagascar are,

But food isn’t their priority,

Rather, they hunger even greater to hear the word of God.

Some stay for services that last hours long,

Staying even into the evening, meaning they would skip meals,

Just to hear the Word of God and worship with their brothers and sisters in Christ.

**“Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”** – Matthew 4:4.

The Malagasy Lutherans live this teaching,

Because they realize that what we fill ourselves with matters.

And that’s why I think of these folks when I read about the crowd of 4,000 from the Gospel reading today.

Unfortunately, I think our great material wealth in America has warped our values.

The more things we get,

The more things we want,

The more things we think we need.

We’re so concerned with the material goods we have,

Or the social events of life surrounding us that don’t necessarily include church,

Or we put all our energy into entertainments,

that we’re too exhausted to read our bibles,

participate in a Bible Study,

Or pray with our families.

Our spiritual needs are neglected and tossed by the wayside in search of being filled with other things.

In summary, we hunger for God.

And at times, we don’t know it.

In the Gospel reading today,

the crowds had been with Jesus for three days.

They were listening to Jesus preach and teach!

They were glued to Jesus.

So much so, they skipped meals and hadn’t eaten for three days.

But did they care? NO!

They hungered and thirsted for righteousness –

That’s what they prioritized.

They kept wanting to hear more!

What’s admirable about these folks,

Is that they rendered themselves empty physically,

that they may be filled spiritually.

Yes, they were empty physically –

But was it worth the cost?

Absolutely.

Because they weren’t empty spiritually –

they were filled with the enfleshed Word!

The true hunger which plagues all humanity,

Whether we know or feel it or not,

Was given satisfaction.

They weren’t living by bread alone,

but by the word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

This crowd lived what Jesus said in Matthew 6:25 and 33–

**“do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink,**

**Nor about your body, what you will put on.**

**Is life not more than food, and the body more than clothing?**

**[…] Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,**

**And all these things will be added to you.”**

But after three days, it was time for Jesus to move on to another town.

These people needed to go home.

But the journey was too much for them physically,

Because they were empty of the calories needed to make it back!

Otherwise, they would’ve fainted!

But Jesus knew the true desires of their hearts –

Their desire wasn’t for their bellies, or anything else!

It was to be filled by God.

So, Jesus had compassion on those who were there,

Because they were physically empty.

His compassion led Him to multiply bread and fish for this Gentile crowd of 4,000 people.

They ate and they were filled physically now too.

Not from themselves, but from the hand of God.

These people sought God and His righteousness.

And now, Jesus made good on His promise –

**“these things will be added unto you.”**

These folks were so hungry for Jesus.

Yet it’s the joke in our circles, and every joke has a bit of truth to it,

that if the Divine Service lasts more than an hour,

or an hour and fifteen minutes on Sundays,

then we can’t get our seats at Cracker Barrell before the Baptist church gets out.

Or, then we can’t make it back to watch our NFL team play football?

Or, Sunday is my one day off, and I want to rest how I please,

Not the way God commands because it’s what’s best?

What is more valuable: what our bellies consume? The entertainments we desire?

Or what the soul needs?

That is, if we even come to church at all.

But if we do come to church, are we listening?

Do we value preaching? Do we value teaching?

Do we value the Divine Service?

Do you know what you receive in the Divine Service?

Do we know the privilege we have to have God’s Word so accessible to us?

Do the words we use to praise God for giving His divine gifts of forgiveness,

match the praise of our hearts?

Or are the words of our lips just as empty as our hearts?

Are you empty? Are you here to be filled?

**“Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”**

It almost seems like we have the opposite problem of the crowd of 4,000.

We’re filled with bread without really being filled with the Word of God.

We’re filled with the Word of God to the point of what I call “spiritual life support.”

We’re not really filling ourselves with His Word and gifts,

We sort of utilize the Word of God for one hour or so on Sundays,

Getting the spiritual IV stuck into our veins,

To not touch the Bible or genuine prayer until next Sunday.

At times, we may not be getting enough of the Word of God to grow and flourish.

It’s like this:

the tomato plants in my garden get watered once a day for about fifteen minutes.

However, they’ve been living in the 105 degree heat for the past month and a half.

They’re still alive – they’re stalks are a healthy green.

But they’re on life support.

They certainly aren’t flourishing,

because they aren’t really producing anything.

They look alive, but they aren’t really “filled”.

Jesus has compassion on those who come to him,

Who trust His Word above all else,

Who seek His righteous fruits from the cross,

Which give the forgiveness of sins.

His Word not only gives forgiveness,

But it arms us to live in this world not on spiritual life support,

But it makes us grow and flourish for His Kingdom.

If we did value His words and teachings more than food,

Do you think he would let you go without food?

Do you think he would neglect your daily needs?

No, he would not.

**“For man does not live by bread alone,**

**but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”**

Seek after God and His righteousness, and these needs will be added unto you.

Due to sin, we’re empty vessels needing to be filled with the Word of God.

Constantly. Daily.

Because the 105 degree heat that comes from living in this sinful world is drying up our fruits.

Yet, His Words are powerful.

His Words give promises that grant life everlasting,

But also His Words strengthen you today, who you are now,

To live a life of holiness and love towards God and those God places before you.

Some know this,

and seek to be filled with God’s Word as often as possible.

This is where Christ’s compassion comes in –

He fills the needy with good things.

So, confess.

Seek God and His righteousness.

Come before the God who seeks to have compassion on you.

Come and receive Him,

for He comes to give Himself to you THROUGH bread.

He attaches His Word of promise to this bread and wine,

And gives it to you,

To fill you with forgiveness, life, and salvation,

To fill you with what you need to continue in the strength of your faith,

As you continue to seek God’s Word and promises throughout your week too.

Through His body and blood,

He seeks to give you the fruits of His cross –

That when you leave here, you may eat and be filled,

For our compassionate God has comes to have mercy on you.

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