

Sermon – Mark 8.1-9 (Trinity 7 – 2024)

Our Eyes Look to the Lord

Let us pray: Lord God, heavenly Father, in the wilderness by Your Son You abundantly fed four thousand men, besides women and children, with seven loaves and a few small fish: We beseech You, graciously abide among us with Your blessing, and keep us from covetousness and the cares of this life, that we may seek first Your kingdom and Your righteousness, and in all things needed for body and soul, experience Your ever-present help; through Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen.

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

In those days, the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples *to Him* and said to them,

² "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat.

³ "And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar."

⁴ Then His disciples answered Him, "How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?"

⁵ He asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven."

⁶ So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke *them* and gave *them* to His disciples to set before *them*; and they set *them* before the multitude.

⁷ They also had a few small fish; and having blessed them, He said to set them also before *them*.

⁸ So they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover fragments.

⁹ Now those who had eaten were about four thousand. And He sent them away,

These are Your words heavenly Father. Sanctify us by the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear fellow redeemed,

Jehoshaphat was the king of Judah. And though he made some unwise alliances, and his faithfulness in preserving Judah in the worship of the Lord weakened in the latter part of

his reign, he was overall a good king, following the ways of his great-great grandfather, King David.

At one point in his reign, the Moabites and Ammonites, among other enemy nations, gathered together to fight against Judah. The news got to Jehoshaphat. What did he do? He directed his eyes to the Lord. The book of 2 Chronicles tells us: **“Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah”** (2 Chronicles 20:1). And then all of Judah followed suit: **“Judah gathered together to ask help from the LORD; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.”** The chronicler records Jehoshaphat’s prayer, in which he ends it, **“O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You”** (2 Chronicles 20:12).

They prayed knowing that God is their God who has called them His own.

And then God gives them promise. The Holy Spirit caused a man named Jahaziel to speak for Him, saying to the people of Judah, **“Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the LORD to you: ‘Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God’s. Tomorrow go down against them... You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!’ Do not fear or dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD is with you.”**

Receiving the Word of the Lord, they gave thanks to God. Jehoshaphat and all of Judah bowed their faces to the ground and gave thanks to God and worshiped Him.

And they trusted that God would keep His Word. For the army of Judah was led, not by men ready for battle, but men singing praise, saying **“Praise the LORD, for His mercy endures forever.”** God came through on His promise and delivered God’s people. He destroyed the numerous enemies, and it took Judah three whole days to gather the spoils.

Here we see a great example of God’s gracious providence for His people. And because God is gracious and He provides, we are to look to Him for all our needs, trust in Him to provide for us, and to give Him thanks for His gracious care for our lives here on earth. Jehoshaphat serves us a great example of this.

Of course, the greatest example of this is our Lord Jesus Christ. When He became man so that He may become our substitute saving us from the condemnation of the law we deserved, He also acquired the needs that all of mankind have. The uncreated eternal Son of God through whom we and all things were created, became a created being. When He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary, He obtained the needs of mankind.

He needed food, and drink, and sleep, and shelter. He needed parents, and friends, and health, and peace. He looked to the Father for all these things, He trusted perfectly in the Father to provide for Him His daily bread. And He received all the Father's gifts with thanksgiving.

Jesus stood among the crowd of 4000, not only as the One who receives the daily bread, but also the One who provides. He is the One who will perform the miracle and provide for the people. He is the One who will, with His divine might, multiply the loaves and fish for the crowd.

But the disciples didn't recognize this. Jesus presented the problem; they didn't look to heaven to ask God for His provisions. They didn't look to Jesus to miraculously feed the crowd. They did not trust in their Lord to provide for the people.

But Jesus knew where the help would come from. He trusted in His Father to provide. Whereas in the wilderness at the temptation of Satan, Jesus did not make loaves of bread out of stones to feed himself, here Jesus performs a miracle in accordance with the Father's will to multiply the bread and fish for the sake of the famished people gathered around Him. And He provides it abundantly! He gives thanks to the Father for the food that He makes abundant. And by collecting what remained, Jesus shows that He is not wasteful with His Father's gifts.

How foolish of the disciples to doubt their Lord! How foolish of them to not follow Jesus' example, looking to the Father, trusting in Him, and giving Him thanks. But do we not do the same, and even worse? Instead of going to God in prayer for all our earthly needs, do we instead grumble about our lack? Do we pray "Give us this day our daily bread" without even thinking of these words, and without sincerely looking to Him to provide for us? We fail to realize that everything we have is from the Lord. We lack the faith to acknowledge this, being materialists thinking that everything we have is from our own hands or the merely from the hands of other people. Or we are new age sorts, thinking that it is luck that provides for us. Either way we do not receive our daily bread with thanksgiving as we ought. Our gratefulness falls short.

We have sinned against our Creator and Preserver, who loves us and wants us to look to Him for all good things that we need, and to receive all things with thanksgiving.

He provides for us the most important thing that we need. He provides for us His Son. Jesus perfect trust of that Father, and thanksgiving of all that He had been given is not only an example for us, but it is His righteousness that God credits to our faith. And the perfect and innocent Jesus, who so pleased the Father, went to the cross to pay the penalty for our grumbling, our lack of trust in Him, our thanklessness, and our wastefulness of His gifts. Jesus suffered the suffering that we deserved. He received our hell, and our death. And thus He atoned for our sins!

And so, with repentant hearts, our eyes are directed to Him in the Word and Sacraments, because in His mercy, He forgives us our sins for Jesus' sake. He so graciously declares us righteous, and receives us as His own people.

And so with our eternal needs satisfied by our merciful God, we also direct our eyes to Him in all our earthly needs. We know the compassion that Christ showed upon the crowd that day, and recognize that this is the same compassion that He has for you today.

Direct your eyes to Him. For daily bread, for help with your bodily needs, with mental needs, help with peace, help as we live in the midst of enemies, help for our loved ones, and help for our relationships, we look to Him. God loves you. He provides maybe not what you are looking for but what He sees fit to give you according to His love and wisdom. It might be plenty with baskets overflowing, or it may be crumbs. But in all, give thanks for He is gracious toward you, and ultimately is abundant in giving you the blessings of the kingdom of heaven. Your cup overflows with forgiveness, life, and salvation. Amen.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Forevermore. Amen.