

***Risen Christ Lutheran Church
Arvada, Colorado***

Sunday Family Devotion in Absence

***Fourth Sunday in Lent
March 22, 2020***

OPENING HYMN *Lutheran Service Book 743 "Jesus, Priceless Treasure"*

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

INTROIT *Psalm 122:1-2, 6, 8; Isaiah 66:10a, 11a*

Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her,
all you who love her;
that you may nurse and be satisfied
from her consoling breast.
I was glad when they said to me,
"Let us go to the house of the LORD!"
Our feet have been standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem!
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!
May they be secure who love you!
For my brothers and companions' sake
I will say, "Peace be within you!"
Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.

COLLECT OF THE DAY

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Your mercies are new every morning; and though we deserve only punishment, You receive us as Your children and provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant that we may heartily acknowledge Your merciful goodness, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

OLD TESTAMENT *Exodus 16:2-21*

² And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, ³ and the people of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." ⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not. ⁵ On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they

gather daily.”⁶ So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, “At evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt,⁷ and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against the LORD. For what are we, that you grumble against us?”⁸ And Moses said, “When the LORD gives you in the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to the full, because the LORD has heard your grumbling that you grumble against him—what are we? Your grumbling is not against us but against the LORD.”⁹ Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, ‘Come near before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.’”¹⁰ And as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.¹¹ And the LORD said to Moses,¹² “I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.’”¹³ In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp.¹⁴ And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground.¹⁵ When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat.”¹⁶ This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Gather of it, each one of you, as much as he can eat. You shall each take an omer, according to the number of the persons that each of you has in his tent.’”¹⁷ And the people of Israel did so. They gathered, some more, some less.¹⁸ But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat.¹⁹ And Moses said to them, “Let no one leave any of it over till the morning.”²⁰ But they did not listen to Moses. Some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them.²¹ Morning by morning they gathered it, each as much as he could eat; but when the sun grew hot, it melted. (ESV)

GRADUAL *Psalm 122:1, 7*

I was glad when they said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the LORD!”
Peace be within your walls
and security within your towers!

EPISTLE *Acts 2:41-47*

⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common.⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (ESV)

HOLY GOSPEL *John 6:1-15*

¹ After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias.² And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick.³ Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples.⁴ Now the Passover,

the feast of the Jews, was at hand. ⁵ Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” ⁶ He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. ⁷ Philip answered him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.” ⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹ “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?” ¹⁰ Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. ¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted.

¹² And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.” ¹³ So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. ¹⁴ When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!” ¹⁵ Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself. (ESV)

SERMON HYMN *Lutheran Service Book #625 “Lord Jesus Christ, Life-Giving Bread”*

SERMON

This is hard! And I don't like it. As the people of God, we want to be together in the divine service to receive our Lord's Word, to be renewed in our Baptismal life through Holy Absolution, and to be Spiritually nourished and physically benefitted with the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion. But for now, we can't. And it's not the same to have a devotion at home and to read a sermon from a page. Even the sermon isn't the same. My belief is that the sermon is supposed to be something that happens in the context of the worshiping community of Christians in the divine service. It's not just information to feed our mind – though it is that too – but most of all, a faithful sermon on the Holy Scriptures is a ritual act that imparts the Holy Spirit into the heart and soul of God's people to bring Christ's saving work into us by faith and to work love within us for our heavenly Father and our fellow human beings. The sermon has to do with greeting people as they come into church, shaking hands and giving hugs before the service even starts. It has to do with confessing our sins together, singing together, being together. It has to do with looking each other in the eye and making a personal contact while God's Word is preached. Other than once or maybe twice, I haven't written out my entire sermon to be read word for word over the last 25 years. So, this is a bit outside of my comfort zone, as is this entire situation for all of us. We will be together again soon; but for now, all we can do is make the most of it.

This is a time of testing. God always tests his people, his royal children, in times of need and difficulty. We see this in the Old Testament reading for today, where the Israelites became hungry after their exodus from slavery in Egypt. In their hunger, they became angry and grumbled against Moses and Aaron and ultimately the Lord. “Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Behold, I am about to rain bread down from heaven for you, and the people will go out and gather one day's portion every day, that I may *test* them, to see whether they will walk in my law or not (Exod 16:4).’” We know from the rest of the reading that, after the Lord tested them, he blessed them with all the food they needed.

In the Gospel reading, a similar thing happened. Many people came to Jesus and his disciples in a remote place. “Lifting up his eyes, he saw that a large crowd was coming toward him. Jesus said to Philip, ‘Where shall we buy bread, so that these people may eat?’ He said this to *test* him, for he already knew what he was going to do (John 6:5-6).” Being from that area,

Philip would have known the resources available, which is probably why Jesus asked him and not one of the other disciples. His response? It is impossible; eight months wages would not buy enough bread for each person to have one bite. In other words, there isn't enough money and there isn't bread available for so many. (We can relate, ourselves having seen empty shelves in our grocery stores lately. During my last trip to the store, there was not one loaf of bread left in the bread aisle.) Andrew got involved and pointed out that there were five small barley loaves and two small fish. But that is not enough to feed everyone. Or is it? Jesus was testing his disciples. Just as he had tested the Israelites in the wilderness, so he tested his disciples to see whether they would trust in him to provide all that they needed. The result was that everyone had plenty of food; and even after the entire crowd had eaten all they wanted, each disciple ended up with a basketful of food for himself.

The testing came first, then God blessed them; and he does the same for you and me. We are all going through a time of testing – the world, our nation, our state, our city, our church, our families – are in a difficult time in our lives. As Christians, we know that the time of God's blessing will come soon. Like those disciples in the Epistle reading, we as Baptized children of our heavenly Father know that before too long we will be together again face to face to receive the apostolic word, the breaking of bread in Holy Communion, and join together in the liturgy and prayers of the Church. We will eat together again with exceedingly joyful and humble hearts, praising God and enjoying one another again. And above all, we look forward to the time when all testing will be over and we will enjoy the eternal blessings of heaven in the presence of the Holy Father, Holy Son, and Holy Spirit together with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven forever and ever without end. Amen.

NICENE CREED

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER HYMN *Lutheran Service Book 709 "The King of Love My Shepherd Is"*

COLLECT FOR THE WORD

Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that, by patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life,

through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

BENEDICTION

The Lord bless us and keep us.

The Lord make his face shine on us and be gracious to us.

The Lord look upon us with favor and give us peace. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN *Lutheran Service Book 642 "O Living Bread from Heaven"*

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