

**Sermon for Trinity, Manilla, July 20th, Seventh Sunday after Trinity + Pastor Daniel Vogel,
Manning, Iowa**

+++Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!
Amen

The title of our message for today is: "FEEDING OUR SOULS" based on our lesson from our Gospel, **Mark 6:30: "Jesus had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd"**

Dear Friends in Christ: Jesus just fed more than 5,000 and a few weeks later he fed over 4,000. And that was just the recorded number of men, not the women and children! Boy do we need a guy like Jesus these days, right?! It is estimated that we have over 600,000 in this country who are homeless and don't know where their next meal will come from. And in Iowa 3,000 are estimated to be living on the streets, in vehicles, wherever they can. Are there homeless in Manilla and Manning? What a world of sorrow is all around us. Most of us have never gone hungry for even a day, and can't imagine such a life.

Today we continue to study the amazing chapter of the book of St. Mark, the 6th chapter. Here Jesus teaches us that He is the Lord of heaven and earth, of bread for body and soul. And we need Him more than ever, for our hungry bodies and souls!

This chapter starts with Jesus going to His hometown where He is rejected. Then Jesus sends out His 12 new followers to proclaim that the people should repent. Then we read of the horrific story of the killing of John the Baptist by the corrupt King Herod and his wife the Queen. And today we come to this story of Jesus preaching to a massive crowd and miraculously, when He is done, before they head home, He feeds all of them with a satisfying meal. What a day, what a life for this Rabbi/Teacher of Nazareth!

So it's a chapter from Mark of the fast paced ministry of Jesus. What is He doing and why is He doing it? Well, He is meeting the people where they are and bringing them the message that God wants all of us to learn, that we need Him in our daily lives right here in Manilla, Iowa and worldwide.

He speaks to the people and compares them to sheep that are lost and in desperate need of the help and the guidance of a shepherd. In the land of Israel sheep were the life blood of the people and their culture. But here Jesus is not talking about livestock, He's talking about our human nature, the same human pain of sin that has stained all of humankind since the Fall of man by Adam and Eve and that we, each of us, have all inherited.

In our first lesson from the prophet Jeremiah he gives God's warning to the Shepherds of his sheep saying: **"Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture.....Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherd who care for my people. "You have scattered my flock and have driven them away and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil deeds, declares the Lord."**

Again, God is not talking about animals, He's talking about the compassion He feels for His people who have been misled by evil leaders. Sounds familiar doesn't it? Because every generation of every civilization needs God's help and they have been misled by their own sin and by the sinful leaders who don't or won't point them to the True God.

And we too are like Jesus says: ***'sheep who are scattered'***. This chapter is about the power of sin, people confused about the real purpose in life and never satisfied with God's plan. Jesus' neighbors in His hometown of Nazareth, Jesus' own family, even His disciples were all overcome by sin.

So first, when Jesus came to His hometown to preach in the Synagogue with His family present the people became angry because they understood that He was calling Himself the Messiah/God. St. Luke writes in 4:29 that they tried to take Him to a cliff and throw Him off to kill Him. And not even His own family members stood up to the crowd to defend their brother.

Later in the chapter, after Jesus came walking on the water the disciples showed their weak human nature. They were terrified thinking Jesus was a ghost and verse 32 it says: ***"They were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened."***

In our world we have so many lost folks, not just the homeless but foreigners and so many others who are confused and following causes of emptiness and even hatred toward others. Their hearts have become hardened to the love of Jesus. So the point of Jesus' miracles wasn't just about feeding people satisfying food, it was to feed them spiritually. While the people wanted to make Jesus a new King, a 'Bread King' who would give free food and more, Jesus wanted to be their Savior. That's a message for us today as we are blessed with so much but we too are tempted and at times spiritually hungry.

JESUS IS THE LORD OF COMPASSION FOR YOU AND ME. This like all the stories of Jesus points us to His purpose in this world and our purpose for life and living. Our Psalm for this day is the beautiful and famous ***Psalm 23: The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want, He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside still waters, He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake."***

The word RIGHTEOUSNESS is a key word in our lessons today. Jeremiah writes: ***"Behold the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and He shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which He will be called: "The Lord is our Righteousness."***

So the point for us to learn today in this amazing story is that Jesus feeds ALL with His righteousness. That big word RIGHTEOUSNESS is all about our relationship with God Almighty. As we learn from God's Law, because of our sin, we are not right with God. As weak sheep in this world we cannot find God or measure up to His perfection. As Romans 3:23 says: ***"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"***. And our 2nd reading from Ephesians 2 says of our

human nature: ***"....remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and stranger to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."***

We cannot make ourselves right with God but Jesus, the Perfect Man, has done that for us. From His sacrificial death on the Cross to His Resurrection, to eternal life, He is our Lord of Righteousness. He has paid for our sins. He has suffered for us and God has then declared us to be forgiven. Now, because of Jesus' sacrifice, according to God's perfect standard, we have inherited a new life, a citizenship in heaven. Isaiah 33:22 says: ***"The Lord is our judge; the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King; He will save us."***

We have a huge challenge in this country now with new immigrants. They are noncitizens and so they come to this country with few rights. They come for the opportunities that this country offers and citizenship is the greatest honor. In a spiritual sense we can relate to such foreigners. St. Paul writes in Ephesians 2 that as sin has separated us from God and His kingdom, our only hope lies in Jesus who unites us to the True God and His Kingdom. He writes: ***"For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no long strangers and aliens, you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."***

The story of Jesus' miracle feeding ends very simply with these words: ***"And they all ate and were satisfied"***. In Jesus' day folks traveled with a wicker basket of bread, it was a daily part of their attire. Bread was considered a gift from God. So nothing went to waste and following both of Jesus' miracles of feeding thousands the 12 disciples picked up the leftovers and they had more than enough to fill their food baskets.

They all ate and were satisfied physically, but maybe not spiritually. Because later we read that the crowds in an era of poverty now wanted Jesus to be their 'Bread King'. They didn't get the real meaning, the real message of the miracle.

Let us be satisfied, not just with our vocations in life, but with the most important nourishment, our spiritual food. For we now have access, daily access with God our Heavenly Father. We are no longer lost sheep, we have a new identity, our citizenship is in heaven. We have God's nourishing Word and His very presence in the Lord's Supper, the holiest meal we can eat.

Speaking of our identity, a few weeks ago my wife Paula and I flew to see our daughter and new baby. When we got to security at the Des Moines airport Paula realized she had forgotten her Driver's license and had no other identification. She quickly learned that suddenly she had lost her national identity and no right to fly. We were taken aside and she was asked a long series of questions while the chief security officer talked on the phone to someone, asking all

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kinds of odd questions: address, make and model of our vehicles, old phone numbers and others. Finally they were satisfied that she was not a threat and we were allowed to board but only with the warning to have her identification for our return flight because, he said, you only get two chances in life for such a mistake.

As Christians we are moved to care for our neighbors, especially those with a special need and identity. Jesus said in Matthew 25:40: ***"Truly, I say to you as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."*** Christians have led the world in sharing the compassion of Jesus for the lost, the confused, the needy. Like so many communities we have a food pantry in Manning to help families in need. Our Iowa District West has a special Alert team to respond to disasters like the tornado damage in Greenfield and Lutheran Family Service offers counseling of all sorts. Worldwide our LCMS World Relief and other agencies help wherever there is a special need. Each of us are challenged to help as St. Paul says in Ephesians 2:10: ***"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."***

Our green pastures of Iowa are a sign of blessings, of crops that feed the world. But let us always remember where our real most satisfying food comes from Jesus who feeds us like no restaurant can! And it is free! No one should be spiritually homeless. Our citizenship is in heaven and we have all the rights and privileges of the most holy saints of heaven for we are children of God.

In Jesus' Name,
May the peace of God that is beyond human understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen