**Feed Them**

**Mark 8:1-7**

Trinity VII

07.31.2022

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

Food! It is an integral part of our life. We see this from the very beginning. Our OT lesson from early in Genesis is about food.

*Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil… The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”*

It is an evident truth that food is an integral part of our life, it is necessary. Does that mean however, that we eat indiscriminately? It's plainly obvious for my waistline that there are some things from which I might possibly want to consider abstaining.

If you listen to the world's consideration in regards to food, and they sing their chorus loudly, there are things you most definitely should avoid eating. Their litany goes on and on…this food causes high blood pressure, this food guarantees to raise your cholesterol, too much of this will bring about obesity, don't eat or drink anything with high fructose corn syrup. You know the ones about which I speak.

I have personally eaten a lot of almonds, but I guess I must have never eaten any female almonds because I do not know where they get the milk from.

But I do wish that one prohibition against a particularly appetizing food would have been obeyed. Adam was told do not eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die.

You all know what happened! Adam and Eve ate the fruit, they received the curse, were kicked out of the garden, and animals were killed to make garments of skin to cover them. Blood shed! Life sacrificed! And now eating would be a chore! Instead of just walking through the garden and picking what you wanted, you had to contend with weeds. Before sin, bread was not part of your diet, now it is integral – and it is something made by the sweat of your brow.

People have asked, “What would have happened if they wouldn't have eaten that fruit? What if they had not sinned? What would life be like?”

It is kind of a sad question, because it really doesn't need to be asked. It's speculation! And it is speculation based upon what we desire after a good 6,000 years of inbred sinfulness.

What was different about that tree from which they were not supposed to eat? Many have tried to name what kind of fruit tree it was, but we truly have no clue. It simply was the tree which had God's command, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

So, was it an apple tree? It was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the tree from which they should not eat! Was it a quince, as is said on Jeopardy? It was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the tree from which they should not eat!

It was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when they ate the fruit, they learned to know evil. They already knew good, in fact they knew ‘very good,’ all of God’s creation given to them as a gift. So, when they ate, did this fruit impart any wisdom? Was this some super food that expanded their mind? Simply put, they now knew evil! Where they had only known good, a right relationship with God, now they knew evil. Now they knew their disobedience against God. Disobedience is the most succinct definition of evil. Evil is disobedience to God's word.

What is the evil in your life? Simply put, your disobedience to God's word. In what ways are you disobedient to God's word? For where you are disobedient to God's word, you surely deserve to die. In fact, that's what we're told in Romans today. *The wages of sin is death.* What is sin? Disobedience to God!

But we also need to consider our gospel lesson. Here are these folks who had nothing to eat. They have been following Jesus around for three days. Does this mean they had nothing to eat for three days? The text does not really tell us. Those are simply the words of Jesus, that they had remained with him for three days.

So, Jesus basically tells His disciples that they need to feed them. This puts the disciples in panic. There is no way they can find enough bread, much less anything else, to satisfy all these people in this far off, desolate place.

They quickly discover they have seven loaves of bread. Oh yeah, and a few small fish. Jesus takes this meager portion and performs an incredible a miracle. He set a meal bread and fish – gave it to the disciples, and the disciples fed all those gathered.

How much like Adam and Eve do we trust God's word? How much like the disciples do we respond to God's word? We doubt it! We question whether it is possible to do what it suggests!

Of course, we have many other sins regarding the heeding of God's Word. Sometimes we ignore it! Other times we think it is completely inappropriate for this day and age, and the world tells us that is true. In fact, it pushes us to adopt such an attitude.

Today's miracle by Jesus serves a much greater purpose than we might first expect, much more than what our fleshly eyes see when reading this text. We see hungry people fed fish and chips. Four thousand are fed ***AND SATISFIED*** from seven loaves and a few small fish. Wow! What a miracle! No church ladies’ group ever in existence would have even ***begun*** to offer a meal to such a group unless they had the ability to feed 8,000.

Jesus has the disciples feed them. But it is He who gives them what they are to distribute, doing so in a miraculous way. ***And He took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, He broke them and gave them to His disciples to set before the people; and they set them before the crowd.***

Jesus fed them so that they might travel home, even though the journey was long. He fed them to strengthen them on the way, and He fed them using his disciples.

“Feed them!”

It was the upper room, He had celebrated the Passover with them. He's preparing to go to the cross and give His life into death for those who are disobedient to His Word. He's going to purchase forgiveness by paying the wages owed by all for their sinfulness – death – a horrific death upon the cross. In the midst of that meal in that upper room, He took the bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them and said, “Take eat; this is my body!”…

Can you imagine how the disciples must have looked at each other, maybe mouthing the words, “Did He say, eat His body?”

Now consider again His miracle of feeding four thousand. Does it take on a different perspective for you? Did He do it to feed those four thousand people far from civilization in a miraculous way just so they wouldn’t grow weak on the way home? He could have said, “Be filled! Have your hunger satisfied,” and it would have been done. It is after all, how He created all that exists.

Or was there a greater purpose? Was the miracle with the loaves and fishes His way to prepare His disciples to believe His word when He said, “Take eat; this is my body.”?

Does this miraculous feeding of the four thousand and then His miraculous feeding of the five thousand prepare the disciples to be sent out to take the even more unbelievably miraculous meal of His body and blood to people that they might eat and drink for their forgiveness of sins?

Dearly beloved of God, you and I have a long walk before we get home. It is a wilderness, a dreary, parched land through which we wander. The devil is even prowling around, seeking to devour us. That is exactly why Christ tells His disciples to feed you. It is about eating that you might be strengthened for the journey.

Christ took your sins and mine to the cross. He died there, giving His life as the wages you and I owe for our sinfulness – death.

“Feed them!” is what Jesus tells His disciples of every age. They are hungry, needing to be fed for the journey. So it is, that from the cross, the tree upon which He was cursed for your sakes, Jesus feeds you His life.

This miraculous feeding of four thousand prepares you to understand that it is Christ who feeds you. He gives you to eat and to drink of Himself when you gather together in this place. The cross now becomes the tree of Life, The Life of Christ given for you on that cross and it feeds you though the wilderness on your way to your eternal home.

Dearly beloved of Christ, come often to be fed and nourished. Come often to receive Christ, the only food that nourishes and grants strength to you for the journey home.

Come and expect the miraculous, not as the world sees it, but to look beyond what your eyes discern as bread and wine, and receive what Christ comes to give you. His body – His blood – His life unto life everlasting. In the name of Jesus. Amen.