

Satisfying Perspective

We hear in our Gospel lesson today that over 4,000 tired and hungry people ate the miraculous meal of fish and loaves and they were satisfied, and we can't help but think, "*Well... duh! Of course they were satisfied!*" They got a free lunch! Who doesn't like that?! On top of that, there was ***more than enough*** to go around for everyone, with seven huge baskets left over. Jesus didn't just give them a Snickers bar. Their hunger was more than satisfied. More than that, it was Jesus Himself satisfying them in a truly miraculous way. What an honor, to be on the receiving end of such a gracious and profound miracle! ***Who wouldn't be satisfied?*** And I think if we're honest, we hear about this massive group being satisfied by Christ, and a certain sense of ***jealousy and covetousness*** comes over us. Look at the world we live in. Everywhere you look (even in the mirror, if you're honest), and all you see/hear is ***great dissatisfaction (and that's putting it nicely), sometimes for the right reasons... and sometimes not.*** Nobody is truly satisfied... really with anything, it seems. In fact, it's impossible to believe that EVERYONE, let alone anyone, could ever possibly be truly "satisfied" with anything, let alone all that goes on in the course of our daily lives.

And it's at this point that we could immediately jump to the reality that no matter the circumstance we may find ourselves in, we have already been satisfied in Christ, by Christ. Our deadly debt of sin has already been fully and completely satisfied, paid in full with the all-atoning, just and righteous wrath-satisfying blood of the Son of God Himself. "*It is finished, once and for all.*" There's a fancy theological term for this: "vicarious satisfaction." Basically, Jesus took our place. He satisfied our debt for us, in our place. He suffered and died in our place. Our punishment became His punishment, and His righteousness was credited to us. By virtue of our baptism into Him and His victorious death and resurrection, we are made to be ***vicarious victors*** over sin, death, and the grave. This means that no matter how bad things may get on this side of the grave, ***you still have the gift of everlasting life, right?*** Even if **EVERYTHING** else in your life was suddenly snatched up and taken away; even if things got so bad that old Job would thank God that he wasn't you, you still have the heavenly mansion and eternal feast that Christ has already prepared for you, right? Nothing can take that away from you. ***Isn't that satisfying enough? It kind of puts everything else into perspective, doesn't it? It should.***

And truth be told, I could end right now, and it would be a faithful sermon. But here's the thing: ***Our Lord does care about the physical, material side of our lives too.*** I say this only because we Christians, with the best intentions, don't often speak of material goods and riches, at least not in a good sense. When we do speak of such things, we use a term with a negative connotation—mammon—setting forth ***a stark contrast between the material and the spiritual.*** It's either

mammon or the Bread of Life. That's it. Either/or. To be sure, when it comes to matters of salvation, **it is an either/or.** You may make it your god, but all the mammon in the world won't save you. It won't pay for one single sin. God isn't impressed by your bank accounts, your academic degrees, and all your "stuff." He's not swayed or bribed by mammon. It won't get you in the door of heaven. You can't take it with you. In the end, moth and rust will destroy it. Thieves will plunder it and fight over it. ***When your time comes, either you have the Bread of Life or you do not.*** When your time comes, either you're naked and ashamed, or you're covered over in Christ's all-satisfying robe of baptismal righteousness. Either you're locked out in the dark, weeping and gnashing your teeth, or you're reclined at the feast table with your Lord. ***That's it. Either/or.***

But... does our Lord not command us to pray for daily bread? "*Give us this day our daily bread....*" Believe it or not, but your Lord ***does*** care about our physical, material needs. He richly and daily provides for us, ***even when we fail to ask, even when we fail to return thanks.*** He satisfies us with all that we NEED (not necessarily want) for this body and life. Just take a moment to think about all the ***daily bread*** your Lord blesses you with and satisfies you with. Think back to your catechism days. "*What is daily bread? Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and need of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friend, faithful neighbors, and the like.*" "*And the like...*" just in case you think something was ***left out or omitted.*** **Everything** you have and everything you are is a gift given you by God's free and undeserved grace. The ***only*** thing you deserve; the ***only*** thing you have earned is **present and eternal punishment.** That's it! That's your one and only right! You have a right to burn in hell! Everything else is a gracious and merciful gift of God specifically for you, given specifically to you by Him because of His compassion for you; because He loves you. ***Again, it kind of puts everything into proper perspective, doesn't it? It should.***

Now... how many of you are satisfied with your Lord's gracious satisfaction; i.e., your daily bread? That's a different question, isn't it? Old Adam can always find something to complain about. We could be gifted with the goose that lays golden eggs, and we'd still complain about the down feathers; win the lottery, and we'd complain that we have to pay taxes. That's just our selfish, sinful nature. ***We're never truly satisfied.*** We never really appreciate what we have... until we no longer have it. Make no mistakes, just because you may not ***feel*** satisfied doesn't mean you aren't satisfied. **You are satisfied because God is the One doing the satisfying.** He gives and you receive. You are the passive and undeserving recipient of His satisfying gifts. He richly and daily satisfies you with all that you need for this body and life.

And that brings us back to the world we live in right now. Consider your daily bread reality right now ***in the midst of all this sinful darkness and dissatisfaction we call “life” in this world.*** So things don’t go exactly the way you want or think they should go. So the finances may take a bit of a hit. So you can’t do EVERYTHING you used to be able to do. Things have changed. So Walmart doesn’t have your favorite ice cream. They only have forty other brands that you’ll have to decide from before you drive home in one of your cars (because no one here is homeless or carless) and get on your phone that has more technology in it than all the lunar missions combined, all so that you can post a picture of your ice cream ***while lamenting how oppressed and dissatisfied you are.*** Umm... there are many reasons to not be satisfied with how things are in our world right now, but ***you still have daily bread, right?*** In fact, even a cursory glance/inventory of your life reveals an ***overflowing abundance*** of daily bread and blessing in your life, doesn’t it?

And all this necessarily takes us back to the cross of Christ, because apart from this [*crucifix*], **none of the other stuff matters.** Apart from Christ, nothing will truly satisfy. Man has a cross-shaped hole in his heart, and only the cross of Christ will fill that void. In the all-redeeming life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, all your sinful debt has been fully and completely satisfied. ***You have been satisfied in the only way that truly matters by God Himself in Christ and because of Christ. “It is finished!”*** Here is your satisfaction. Look and listen to what goes on here in your midst; in your very presence. No matter what’s shaking out in life, the Word of Life still comes to you. He comes to you, not only in His fully-satisfying Word, but in His ***fully-satisfying Body and Blood.*** Yes! Even this little foretaste of the feast to come is fully-satisfying for life, not just in the life to come, but in the here and now. ***“Take and eat, this is My Body. Take and drink, this is My blood, for the forgiveness of all your sin.”*** When you leave here with the Body and Blood of Christ in your belly and on your breath, ***what more do you have to fear or worry about? You have been satisfied in Christ, by Christ. Kind of puts everything else in perspective, doesn’t it?***

My prayer for you is that this full and complete satisfaction of Christ truly satisfies you. When this Bread of Life satisfaction truly satisfies you, which through the working of the Holy Spirit will be the case through faith, all His satisfying gifts of daily bread will also begin to satisfy you. You will be satisfied with a ***fully-satisfying peace*** that surpasses all human understanding, no matter your circumstance; in good times and in bad, richer or poorer, in sickness and in health. Satisfied by Christ and in Christ, you will ever and always be satisfied, ***giving thanks in all circumstances*** for all that you have and all that you are...in Christ. May this fully-satisfying peace of Christ, which surpasses all human understanding, and which is yours right now, by the grace of God, ***guard, keep, and guide you unto life everlasting. AMEN.***