

9th Sunday after Pentecost
August 2nd, 2020

“Satisfaction Guaranteed!” (Matthew 14:20)
By Rev. Ed Weber

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

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today’s text is from our Gospel reading, Matthew 14:20

“And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over.”

Here ends our text.

All of the 5000 were completely satisfied! Why? because Jesus took care of them! From the miracle in today’s Gospel, we are convinced of two things about our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

- I. First, Jesus guaranteed and provided satisfaction to the 5000 in all their physical and spiritual needs
- II. Second, Jesus guarantees and provides satisfaction to us in all our physical and spiritual needs

Customer satisfaction is something that all smart companies give much attention to. The customer needs come first, because after all, savvy customers will shop around if they feel they are not being well taken care of, right? Because if they have a bad experience with a product or customer service, those negative reviews that customers leave really do have an effect on other buyers, don’t they? I don’t know about you, but if I read three or four bad reviews on something that I’m interested, I move right on to the next company that does things better.

Back when we were doing a little more travelling, pre-Covid-19, did you take the time to read the reviews on a hotel before you reserved a room? Is it clean? Have a friendly front desk? Willing to go the extra mile to make your stay great? Jesus always goes the extra mile for all people.

- I. Jesus guaranteed and delivered satisfaction to the 5000 and all their families for all their physical and spiritual needs

Since this is the only miracle that all four Gospels have recorded, we have lots of details that each evangelist fills in on how Jesus went the extra mile. Take the time to read the other accounts in the 6th chapters of Mark and John, and chapter 9 of Luke.

What kind of a review do you think someone in that group of 5000 would write about their experience in the desert with Jesus and the disciples? To start off, in Luke 9, we hear that though Jesus was taking some time for rest with His disciples, when the people discovered where He was in Bethsaida. How did Jesus react? He **“welcomed”** them! Jesus would never turn someone away in need. Matthew and Mark point out that Jesus **“had compassion on them”**. He saw them as sheep without a shepherd. He healed their sick and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, Luke says.

They were in the presence of someone who really cared for them. Yes, there’s a difference between giving someone attention just to make a sale and genuinely caring for someone. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, always put the sheep first and Himself last. Are you starting to get the idea of what kind of “customer service” Jesus was giving to the people?

So, Jesus healed their bodies, fed their souls with His teaching, and then the people capped off the day with picnic! As John tells us in chapter 6, the people ate the bread and fish, **“as much as they wanted”**. Everything was done in an orderly fashion as they sat down in groups and they were served. And there was more than enough because the disciples gathered up 12 baskets of everything that wasn’t eaten. It was a great day from start to finish!

God always provides more than enough! And if the disciples didn’t get the message that nothing is impossible for Jesus to do after He healed the people, taught them about the kingdom of God, well, with just a couple of fish and a few loaves, He satisfied 5000 men and all their families! What a miracle they witnessed! And, just to drive the point home, Jesus made sure that there was basket for each of the 12.

That wasn’t by accident, of course. Jesus always does things purposefully. He tested Phillip by asking him how all the people who were coming toward them were going to be fed. Later in the day, He told the apostles to feed the multitude. It quickly showed them their limits and inabilities. We can’t. We don’t have the resources. But, there is One who can. And that is the great lesson. For Jesus, the Son of God, can do all things! And He does! It taught the disciples to trust in the One who made the great lights, the sun, the moon and the stars as we read in today’s Psalm 136. And He most certainly is He **“who gives food to all flesh for His steadfast love endures forever,”** as verse 25 tells us.

The church, is represented by the number 12 throughout scripture. The 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles. God is always with His church feeding their bodies and souls. Psalm 136 continues to remind God's church that He brought His people out of the captivity of Egypt and guided them through the wilderness. For His steadfast love endures forever. Satisfaction is guaranteed! And as Psalm 136 concludes, we hear:

“It is He who remembered us in our low estate, for His steadfast love endures forever; and rescued us from our foes, for His steadfast love endures forever;”

And Jesus indeed regarded the world's fallen sinful state, and gave the world the ultimate rescue which was beyond man's abilities and beyond his grasp. What was impossible for man, Jesus did by rescuing us from the captivity of Satan and our eternal death because of our sins. Satisfaction guaranteed! Oh, that all people would see Jesus as not just the King who fills us with the good things for our bodies! Most of all, He wants our souls to be satisfied with His everlasting love, forgiveness and salvation, to eat the Bread of life!

Unfortunately, John 6 tells us that, for most, the picnic was all the people were interested in. **“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.” (John 6:15)**

They like the majority of Israelites who perished in the wilderness left unsatisfied spiritually. God asks all people in our Old Testament reading from Isaiah 55,

“Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. 3 Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.”

Why? Why do we strive after that which does not satisfy God asks us?

Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones wrote a popular song that lamented not being able to find any true happiness or authenticity in what the world offers. You've probably heard the song a few times with that double negative that sticks out like a sore thumb, but really just emphasizes the impossibility of man finding lasting happiness on his own, “I can't get no satisfaction, I can't get NO satisfaction, 'cause I try, and I try and I try...” “Hey, hey, hey, that's what I say”. Yes, I would agree with what Keith says that “we can't get no satisfaction in this world. It's impossible without Jesus!

- II. But, Jesus guarantees and delivers satisfaction to us for all our physical and spiritual needs

Thanks be to God! Jesus invites us to listen to what **He** has to say. What He offers us does satisfy!

“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” (Isaiah 55:1)

Jesus doesn't ask anyone to try and get their own satisfaction. He simply invites us and gives it to us...free of charge! He implores us to come, ...anyone. Come with no money, for it does not cost a thing, we heard in Isaiah.

And God is talking to each of us. This is the kingdom of God that Jesus was telling the 5000 about. It's the kingdom of grace that we can't earn or buy. But, Jesus did. He paid for it all! He put the sinful world first and gave of Himself completely. He saw the world as lost sheep and came to be their Shepherd, our Shepherd. He had compassion on us.

Isaiah 55 continues to implore all men to forsake their wickedness and turn to the God.

“Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon Him while He is near;7 let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

That's satisfaction guaranteed!

The day after Jesus had performed the miracle of the feeding of the 5000, the people found Him on the other side of the lake. They didn't come to receive His kingdom of grace unfortunately. Jesus said in John 6,

“Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on Him God the Father has set His seal.” (John 6:27)

Yes, Jesus gives and gives and gives...in His word, in our baptisms, and in the Lord's Supper, all that we need for our salvation – satisfaction guaranteed!

“Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. 36 But I said to you that you have

seen me and yet do not believe. 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.” (John 6:35-37)

They saw and yet did not believe. Blessed are you who have not seen and have believed for Jesus promises that He will never cast you out! Guaranteed!

Most of the people left unsatisfied and no longer walked with Jesus. Jesus then asked His apostles if they would leave also. Peter spoke for the group.

“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, 69 and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.” (John 6:68-69)

The apostles grew in their faith through the witnessing of this miracle of the feeding of the 5000, with the exception of Judas. If the apostles would have been rated on their “customer service”, they probably would have received 1 star at best for their uncaring attitude and lack of effort. They didn’t go the extra mile. For when the day was getting late, the disciples came to Jesus and said that He should send the people away. Send them away so they that could go get food and lodging. They didn’t see how they could possibly feed so many people. And maybe they were starting to think that the people might become a little disorderly and start rioting. Just send them away. “Out of sight out of mind”

How is your “customer service” rating if people were to review your service to God and others. If we’re honest, we’d also all get 1 star because there is so much that we could do but just choose not to get involved. Do we sometimes not see God’s purpose that even during these severe testing times like this epidemic and hurricane, God can lead people to repent and receive the kingdom of grace through faith in Jesus. God asks us to be compassionate and welcoming to all people at all times and lead them to know the scriptures so that they can make Peter’s confession. Bring out the old and new treasures like we heard last week of the precious Gospel that alone satisfies all people!

What a comfort it is to see that the Good Shepherd doesn’t think like the disciples or us, For Jesus, the sheep are never out of sight or out of mind.

Psalms 139 reminds us of His gracious abiding presence.

“You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.”

God saw us as we were being formed in our mother's womb. He knows all our ways. This Covid-19 pandemic, or whatever hurricane or storm in life we face, of course, is not excluded. So wonderful is this knowledge that the David continues by saying, **“If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.”** Satisfaction guaranteed!

You know, you've probably heard that phrase on a commercial advertising some new product. It only costs you \$19.99. Satisfaction guaranteed or your money back. Whenever I heard that, I always think, that's a contradiction. If you say that there is the possibility that I might want my money back, then my satisfaction is not guaranteed! So, if I buy the product and don't like it or it breaks and I go through the hassle of getting a refund back of my money, how is that a satisfying experience? You can't guarantee my satisfaction with your product. So it's best to just say, “If you're not 100% satisfied then we'll give you your money back.” The world can never guarantee 100% satisfaction.

For who is ever 100% satisfied with anything in this world? Not everybody is satisfied with how the government is handling the fight against Covid-19. Should we wear a mask or not? Who is satisfied with the reopening of the economy, or the reopening of schools, or the police force, or race relations? or ...you fill in the blank. One thing we can guarantee in this sinful world is that “we can't get no satisfaction, 'cause we try, and try, and try”.

But, Jesus makes this promise in the beatitudes in Matthew 5:6,

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

That is a guarantee that Jesus doesn't ever have to qualify. There is no need for a refund. Because Jesus' righteousness satisfies our lack of righteousness 100%. He fills us up completely with His righteousness in our baptisms!

Having our greatest spiritual need met, we can also say with Paul in Philippians 4,

“I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:11-13)

So, whenever you are feeling unsatisfied with the ways of this world, when so much of the world doesn't seem good, repeat the first verse of Psalm 136 to yourself again and

again. **“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever.”**

That’s who our God is. By nature, He is good, and His love never stops. We can count on Him forever! Satisfaction guaranteed! Amen.

“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Galatians 4:7)