

✧ Jesu juva ✧

## FED AND SATISFIED

John 6:1-15

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

**O**ne of the effects of fasting is that you quickly realize what a powerful force hunger can be. The body needs nourishment to survive. Deprive it of what it believes that it needs and it lets you know that it is not happy. Hunger pains are there for a reason, however. They are there, quite simply, to remind us to eat; to express a need that must be filled for the body to be healthy. And to be healthy, a body must eat quite often. Oh, sure a person can survive for a while without food, and for quite a while with a poor diet, but eventually you get ill or simply die of starvation or malnourishment.

We can well understand the predicament of the people who had followed Jesus out into the wilderness that day. They had come a long way and were not prepared. Only one small boy has brought food, and that hardly enough for a decent meal for one family, let alone 5000 men plus women and children; a thought which Andrew voices saying, "but what are they among so many?" But Jesus, the Son of God, has it within Himself to provide for this multitude. And so He takes the loaves of bread and the two fish and miraculously multiplies the food so that it feeds the entire crowd. And when they are done eating there are now twelve baskets full of the leftover pieces of bread. And once again, as with Israel in the wilderness in the time of Moses, the Lord shows Himself to be gracious and merciful in providing the food His people need.



As I said, the body needs to be fed; and so does the spirit. Just as the body without food eventually sickens and dies, so also the soul that is not properly nourished. So what was this great miracle meant to teach? When the same multitudes follow Jesus to the other side of the sea of Galilee the next day, He says to them: "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you..." God provides food for everyone, after all. Does He not? In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says: "He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the

good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” And so we are taught not to be concerned about the needs of the body for which the Lord always provides, but the needs of the soul. A little later in the same Sermon, our Lord says: “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” And so we are to expend our energies on seeking the Kingdom of God, on finding the food that does not perish but which endures to everlasting life. And we find this food only from Christ Jesus, who says a little later in John 6: “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”

But you who are baptized have already received Christ, have you not? So if you shall never hunger and thirst, then why do you need to be nourished again? Why is one feeding not enough for you? The reason is not some deficiency in the food, that is, in Christ Himself. He is indeed nourishment enough to carry you into eternal life. And where He is found His kingdom is found too and His righteousness through the forgiveness of your sins. The reason, rather, is in all of the other things that you take into your soul that are not healthy for you; things that make you weak, that make you ill, that bring doubt, that strengthen unbelief, that eventually bring death if not countered by the power and grace of Christ.

The world is constantly displaying these things before your eyes and thrusting them into your ears, enticing your flesh and your soul away from Christ to dine on a spiritual food which brings not life, but death; that is not really food at all, but poison. And because sin is still active in you, you crave its deadly delights. You know what it is and yet you eat it. You drink it in even though you know consuming it will harm you; for even a little bit is dangerous and can quickly become deadly.

And so you need a food which not only nourishes you, but which will heal you of the hurts that sin brings to the soul; a food which will counteract and overcome the poison. Where can such food be found? Many look to themselves for this food. They think that if somehow they could just follow a better spiritual program they will find nourishment and get better. If they could only meditate more, pray more vigorously, perhaps go to a sweat lodge or something... something to become more in touch with the spiritual side of things. Others think that if they could but avoid the harmful things in life and live according to conscience, or according to God’s Law, they will be fed and healthy. But you cannot find for yourself the food which leads to eternal life. It must be given to you. This is why St. Paul reminds us today: “Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?” The law, whether it be God’s law or one of your own making, cannot save you, cannot heal you, cannot feed you. The law, you see, is like hunger pains. It’s there not to make you feel full, but to show you that you are empty. It reveals your need for something else, something that can fill you up and satisfy your spiritual need.

We find what we need only in Christ. As I said, the food which leads to eternal life, which nourishes the soul must be given to you. "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you." This is what the miraculous feeding of the 5000 is meant to teach us. As Jesus provided earthly food to that crowd, so He also provides spiritual food in abundance to His people. And this He does through His Church. The Introit for today puts it beautifully, speaking of the Church as Jerusalem: "Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad with her, all you who love her, that you may feed and be satisfied with the consolation of her bosom." And what does the bosom of the Church provide? Only what she herself has been given to provide by her Lord: The food of Christ which is Christ. This is the Bread she gives to her children; Bread which comes in multiple forms. We receive this Bread when we receive the Holy Word that Christ proclaims to us. And in this Word He who is the Word is found, who said to the people of the Church in Moses' day: "man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord." And we receive this bread when Christ the Word by the power of His words enters bread and hallows it with His Presence; and then gives it to us to eat and drink. And in this miracle the multitudes are fed again with the manna which comes down from above. Men again eat angel's food, the food of heaven, dining on and with our Lord Himself, who is the Bread of Life.

You need this Bread. You need this nourishment. And in this food, you will find medicine to heal the wounds of your soul, to strengthen you in spirit, to fuel your growth in faith and in faithfulness, to make you steadfast until the end, when at last you will know no more hunger or thirst, but will know full satisfaction and health in Christ Jesus, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen

✠ Soli Deo gloria ✠