

Trinity 7

July 18, 2021

Mark 8:1-9

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

In the beginning, God created and formed man from the dust of the earth. The man was placed in the midst of the Garden in Eden where *“Every tree was pleasant to the sight and good for food.”* (Genesis 2:9) The tree of life stood tall while water flowed throughout, giving life to all God’s creation.

But, this life would soon meet death as the man and his helpmate sinned and transgressed against God. Their failure to trust their Creator and live according to the Word He placed into their ears and hearts led them into the wilderness of this world. Their life and yours is now forged through hardship, through the sweat of the brow and thorns and thistles infesting the earth’s soil – making your work laborious and burdensome.

The result of life apart from the Garden in Eden is one where our bodies deteriorate, relationships are scarred by the emotional wounds of our words, and anxiety grips us as we are seized by the concerns of daily life. We are left wondering, do we have enough food to sustain our body, can we afford our house payment, or our children's tuition amid inflation? Our school is still in need of teachers. Will God provide the teachers needed for the upcoming school year? I don't know, and all this answer does for me is stirs up more anxiety and more turmoil of the heart. None of this is good for my mind, my body, or my faith.

What I do know is that Adam's sin is our sin, and through it, we are led along with our first parents back to the dust of this earth. Until that day, we are left to live in this wilderness alongside God’s creation. But not without hope.

What the world needed after the fall and was promised in the Garden was a Savior. One who would bring and give compassion to a wearied world. Compassion is why the Messiah enters this world of corruption through the Virgin Mary. Through the incarnation, He comes as the Son of God and assumes our flesh – your flesh. In doing so, He takes upon Himself your worry, your anxiety, and all that causes your heart to falter, skip a beat, and grasp for control.

Yet, none of us are genuinely ever in control. I don't know if you caught this, but the crowds with Jesus today in the Gospel aren't mentioned as grumbling or begging for food. They aren't lunging for control; instead, they are passive recipients of God's Word. The folks concerned, worried, and fretting over the situation are the disciples, the closest followers of Jesus.

Now, what we know of the multitudes is that they followed Jesus for three days into a wilderness. Some of you may think a wilderness sounds pretty good about this time in world history, the quiet beauty of nature. But the wilderness of Scripture was not outfitted with MREs or the latest gadgets from Outdoor Life Magazine. No, this wilderness was uncultivated and an inhospitable place where no twig or berry would even be found.

The people following and listening to Jesus were in need even if they hadn't realized it as they went on listening to Jesus teach. In reality, they had come to the point of no return in their journey as Jesus says, *"If I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar."* (Mark 8:3)

How great is this? Jesus recognizes the need for body and life. He doesn't say "tough luck," but He has compassion upon them and feeds the multitude through a measly seven loafs of bread and some fish. His ways are not our ways, and His knowledge is always beyond our comprehension. The crowd teaches us today that our attention should always be directed to the true bread of life, the only begotten Son of God.

However, your attention is often led into a different wilderness even as the sun rises each day. The sound of the alarm on your phone awakens and enslaves you from your slumber. You reach for the nightstand to see the many ways Twitter will jump-start your blood pressure. Or simply wait for a half-hour, and the accidental spillage of milk at the breakfast table will leave you frustrated and muttering to yourself how the day can only go up from here...

But Martin Luther encourages a very different way to awake in the morning, doesn't he? He encourages the Christian to begin with the sign of the cross, pray the Lord's Prayer, and confess the Creed – giving thanks for all the ways God has cared and brought you safely through the darkness of night.

In fact, through the confession of the Creed, you are reminded daily how your heavenly Father has given you your body and soul, just as He created Adam and Eve at the beginning of time. He gave you eyes, ears, and all your members, even reason and your senses. He provides you the means for clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and

home, wife and children, land, animals, and still takes care of them today amid your many anxieties and stress.

Isn't that something? The compassion promised by God the Father in the Garden is now realized in His Son, Jesus Christ. So when Jesus has compassion upon the crowds today, you can see a foreshadowing of the love He has for you, His dear brothers and sisters.

The Greek word for compassion is *σπλαγχνίζομαι*, it is a yearning for sympathy that literally has its source in the stomach (the bowels) of Christ. His mercy poured out for you as He suffers your death, in your flesh, upon the cross. And still today, He has not stopped having compassion for you, but as you approach the altar, He feeds you with the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper. He gives you the bread of life and the chalice of immortality. And then He sends you away, just as He sent the crowds on their way.

You are now sent back into your daily life. You were once slaves to sin, *"but now you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life."* (Romans 6:22)

The fruit you get leads to sanctification. This forgiveness you now receive leads you to the oasis of God's Word and calls you to pray for the needs of life, the needs of your family and neighbors, the needs of your country, the needs of the Church. In other words, we are called as the Church to *"bear one another's burdens."* (Galatians 6:2a)

Our lives will always be accompanied by concern over the daily aspects of this world, but today's Gospel teaches us to first seek the kingdom of God. Seek your Savior who has had compassion upon you, He cares for you and has born the sin of your anxious and troubled heart. He will not send you away hungry or empty but will feed you with His Word, and in the bread of life, you will be brought into eternal life. +INJ+

*The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
Amen.*

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