

Laetare

19 March, Anno Domini 2023

St. John 6:1-15

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

O Philips of God,

Since the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank there has been a lot of talk about the overall banking system in this country and around the world. Is your bank next? Add that fear to the rising interest rates, the increasing unemployment, and the ever-rising price of just about everything, is it any wonder that we are all starting to sound like Philip “Lord, there’s no way these people can be provided for!”

We need daily bread. If we didn’t, God our Father wouldn’t have commanded us to pray for it and promised to give it. But He did both of those things. You don’t receive your daily bread because of SVB or Chase or the FDIC or your hard work and wise financial decisions. To think that way is idolatry, plain and simple. You can watch your budget and your investments like a hawk and study the markets. But they care nothing for you and cannot help you. They too are subject to decay and change. And if you sweat each time the NADAQ drops or interest rates go up, then you are like those who wanted to make Jesus their bread King. They wanted nothing more from Him than physical healing and full bellies. We are all drawn to worship the gifts rather than the One who gives the gifts, to put our trust in the things that are given rather than in Him who gives them. All that you have, you have solely from God who created you. Every good and perfect gift comes from Him and no where else. We are only deluding ourselves into unbelief if we think that there is anything we have, including our very existence, that isn’t from God and isn’t sustained by God. We prayed today that God would help us to acknowledge His merciful goodness and give thanks for all His benefits. What blasphemy to rob God of the thanks and praise due to Him and give them instead such silly things as food and drink and clothing and money and pleasure.

The crowds that followed Jesus out away from their creaturely comforts weren’t wrong to follow Him. That is Jesus’ call to all “Follow me. Whoever loves his life in this world will lose but whoever loses his life for My sake and for the Gospel’s sake will keep it.” They saw that Jesus was healing the sick and they knew that it was good to be with Him, that He gives good things. Most certainly, the daily bread God gives is a testament to His mercy. We don’t deserve anything from Him

and yet He gives it. It is good to want good things from God. It is good to believe that God gives good things because He does.

But your bodies are more than clothing and your life is more than food. Jesus chastised the crowds a little later in John 6 because they wanted nothing more than the bread. You can eat until you are satisfied and be as strong as an ox and in the greatest shape of your life and have every creaturely comfort you ever desired and still be empty. If all you think of Jesus is that He can give you stuff you like, then Jesus is useless to you and you have not rightly considered your need. If the worst thing you can imagine is losing your earthly goods or your health, then you have either not listened to the commandments or you have silenced your conscience to their judgment. They show you that your need is eternal salvation, the forgiveness of all your sins. They show you that the one thing needed is Jesus, your Savior, who gives life and salvation. They tell you that you are eternally condemned because you have not loved God or desired Him above all things. They show you that you have desired nothing more from God than the pleasures and comforts of this sinful life. They show you that your heart lusts after daily bread rather than resting in Christ whose death is the fountain head of every good and perfect gift that God bestows. We are like the crowds, following Jesus and wanting nothing more than that He will make our life here better and easier.

And yet for our foolishness, the Lord Jesus still lifts up His eyes on us and has compassion on us, making His rain to fall on the righteous and the unrighteous alike. Jesus saw the needs of the crowd before they did and provided exactly what they needed, not simply enough to satisfy them but enough that there were twelve giant basket fulls left over - enough to feed over 80 families if the estimated size of those baskets is accurate. He didn't need their contribution. He didn't need the full faith and assurance of the Roman government. He didn't even need what was so obviously enough bread and fish to feed the at least 10,000 people who had followed Him. What He gives is sufficient to carry out His good and gracious will for you. He gives you all of your daily bread. He gives exactly what is good and withholds what is not, even if you think you need it. How silly for us to worry about any of that. A brief survey of the history of God's people will quickly remind you that God feeds His children. You have exactly no reason to doubt that God will do the same for you each and every day.

But Jesus gives so much more! He gives you the bread that does not perish, the bread that satisfies eternally - Himself. Even in the midst of your darkest hours, surrounded by your enemies, battling the brokenness of your mind or your body, as you seem to be scraping by with the five loaves and two fish God has given you,

Jesus provides a place of peace and rest where, wearied and heavy-laden, you can lie down in green pastures and rest. Here in the midst of the wilderness, Jesus prepares a feast for you, right in the midst of your enemies and your fears - a feast of the richest food and the finest wine that imparts to you the forgiveness your sins and His own divine, indestructible, eternal life. Yes, it seems like so little to the eyes of the flesh and unbelief. But to those who listen to Jesus and drink His Word like the sweetest honey, the food that Jesus gives is the most priceless of all treasures.

Beloved children of God, Jesus is enough for you. Indeed, Jesus is everything. When all your heart rests in Him you will know that you truly have all things in heaven and on earth. Here He has invited you to sit down and receive from His hand the bread that gives eternal life to both your body and your soul, forgiving your sins and promising to you the resurrection to eternal life. You have enough. You have Jesus.

In the Name of +Jesus.

Pastor Ulmer

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all human understanding keeps your hearts and your minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.