

Many members. One body united in Christ.

Laetare

St. John 6:1-15

15 March, Anno Domini 2026

Children of the Heavenly Father,

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

It's hard to hear this, or really any of the stories of Jesus miraculously feeding large crowds, and not think of Luther's explanation to the First Article of the Apostles' Creed. In particular the part that reads "He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life." God is generous. He loves to give and give abundantly. Unlike you and me, God isn't stingy with His gifts. He provides more than crumbs and always and only what is best.

And in faith what do we do? We hoard. Pleasure, food, money, popularity, success. Like unbelieving Israel we try to gather more than we need into our barns because who knows if God will be faithful tomorrow (if there is a tomorrow)? "Sure, God has provided for me and delivered me in the past. Sure, He has always provided for His people. But how do I know He will continue to do so? What if He changes His mind? Will He be paying attention? What if He can't give what I need tomorrow."

Repent. God isn't you. He isn't fickle. He isn't greedy. He isn't forgetful. He is lavish with His gifts because He loves you and wants you to have them, even though by your worry and fear you have called Him a liar time and again. Whether your food comes from Sprouts, the food pantry, or your neighbor - God provides. He makes sure that you have exactly what you need at the proper time. This doesn't mean that God won't bring you to times of testing. He will. He does. When your child is suffering from a terrible disease, when interview after interview ends with "We like what we heard but we found someone else", when this paycheck isn't going to cover the bills that just came in the mail, or when the needs of our neighbor press against our plans we immediately begin doubting everything that God has promised.

Why would a loving God do such a thing? Why would He bring about pain and discomfort? Why would we be allowed to suffer need? Because we are so quick to treasure the gift rather than the Giver and measure the Giver by the size of the gift. Regardless of how well off we may or may not be, haven't we all asked Andrew's question - "But what are they for so many? This need is too big and God's love is too small." What if everything you had in this world were taken away from

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you right now? Does the even the prospect frighten you? Have you started tabulating your options? We confess that God richly and daily provides for us ALL that we need, while we are nervously watching the stock market, fretting over what the politicians and tech giants are doing, and wondering if we will ever be able to reach whatever imaginary number we believe will make us secure so that we can stop putting our hand to the plow.

This is precisely why our Lord calls us to fasting and prayer and almsgiving and why the Church has set aside the time of Lent to emphasize those things. Engaging these disciplines is meant to stop the worrying and hoarding and focus our attention on the needful things like hearing God's Word, helping the poor, feasting on the true Bread which comes down from heaven. Fasting and almsgiving teach you how often your flesh lies to you about what you need. Even prayer is a type of fasting. It forces you to fast from your working and see that it is not your business that is important but the Lord's. These disciplines turn your attention away from yourself and outward toward the needs of your neighbor while you learn to know the sufficiency of what God provides.

What God gives is always enough and it is always good, perfect in fact. He gives to you your food at the proper time and always will. He will heal your diseases when His good and gracious will for your salvation has been carried out. Stop worrying. See how Jesus lifts up His eyes on the crowds and has compassion on them? He is concerned about their need. He is just as concerned about yours. More than even you are. He gives what you didn't even know you needed, things that you hardly if ever think about - good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, faithful neighbors, and the like. Have you prayed for these things and the host of others it requires just for you to eat a meal - the farmer, the truck driver, the bagger at the grocery store? And yet these are given to you as well.

Do you think God loves you or that you are going to be okay because you have these things and so many more? Unfortunately, so often we are. We are content to have our homes and meals, our vacations, and our pensions. That satisfies us and we ignore the true gifts which are given to us that make the rest look like trash in comparison. The worry, the fear, the doubt, and the anxiety that afflict you reveal your idolatry, your love and trust in the gifts rather than your heavenly Father who gives them, your heavenly Father who loves you, knows your needs, and well provides them all. The disciples, in the weakness of their unbelief, thought it was up to them to provide. They were blind to the one who asked them the question. No, the loaves and fishes weren't enough because we don't live by bread alone. Jesus is enough because we live by the Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God and

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was born of the Virgin Mary.

You have been given real things to rejoice in. You have been blessed with things that maggots and markets cannot ever destroy. You have been blessed with such eternal gifts that not even death can take away from you. In His great mercy God has snatched you out of your slavery to sin and death, out of your vain and useless striving to save yourself by the works of the Law. He has lifted up His eyes on you and had compassion. He has washed away the filth and the stench of your sin in the cleansing waters of the font and instead, purely out of father divine goodness and mercy, covered your nakedness with the righteousness of Jesus. He has brought you to the Jerusalem that is above, the Jerusalem that is free. In His Church, in this city of peace, God gives you peace that passes all human understanding. In this kingdom you are invited to recline, to lie down and receive the free gifts of God. In the kingdom of God, the rebellious, frightened, grumbling sheep find rest as the Good Shepherd distributes the Bread of His flesh which satisfies the soul because it is this Bread that has been offered as the acceptable atoning sacrifice for your sins. Just as richly and daily as the Lord has provided you with daily bread, even more, He richly and daily forgives all your sins and the sins of all believers. There is no end or limit to this forgiveness. There is no need to ask “But what is so little for so many.” If there were only a drop or a crumb of Christ’s righteousness, it would be more than sufficient. But there isn’t only a drop or a crumb. Your Savior provides enough that every sinner may eat and be satisfied. There is no need for you to go hungry. As often as your weary soul longs to receive the mercy and forgiveness of Christ, so often it is available to you. The baskets were filled with leftovers. “Satan, I defy thee; death, I now decry thee; fear, I bid thee cease. World, thou shalt not harm me nor thy threats alarm me while I sing of peace. God’s great pow’r guards every hour; earth and all its depth adore Him, silent bow before Him.”

What in this world could compare to such treasure? What could the world ever offer to you that could bring you greater joy and peace than Your Lord and Savior giving You His life. Will you return to the flesh pots of Egypt and die? Will you trade the sacrifice of God’s only Son for your own empty works that only stand in judgment over you? “Hence, all earthly treasure! Jesus is my pleasure, Jesus is my choice. Hence, all empty glory! Naught to me they story told with tempting voice. Pain or loss, or shame, or cross, shall not from my Savior move me.”

Behold, the glory of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Eat, drink, and be satisfied with God’s mercy and goodness toward you. For though you deserve only punishment, God has received you as His beloved child.

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In the Name of +Jesus. Amen.