

Many members. One body united in Christ.

The Seventh Sunday after Trinity

St. Mark 8:1-9

19 July, Anno Domini 2026

Beloved in Christ,

It is bred into our sinful nature to scoff at what seems small. When Jesus expressed His concern for those who had been following Him and listening to His teaching for three days, the disciples had seven loaves of bread, but why would they even think of those? Seven loaves. Four thousand people. The math doesn't even kind of work.

Perhaps you don't think you have enough money to feed your family. Perhaps you think the talents and abilities God gave you, if you even believe He gave you any, are useless because you can't save the world.

Do you apply those same standards to others? Do you judge their value by their ability to contribute, the number of degrees they've earned or trophies they've won, their wardrobe, or their address? Is a ninety-year-old woman, hard of hearing, fingers misshapen with arthritis, living in a nursing home on a fixed income, unable to feed and care for herself less valuable than the young lady fresh out of college with an expensive degree, pulling down a six-figure salary, living by herself in her posh downtown apartment, advancing her career aspirations?

This is definitely how the world thinks. The world loves what is big, what is strong, what is expensive. It seeks and praises power and achievement. Those who are of the world love to be noticed and praised for their accomplishments. They love and chase likes and followers. They want their lives and their bodies to look like the altered and completely fake images they see all around them. They believe the lie the devil has fed them through their televisions, their music, and their schools - their value is nothing more than the money they make and the money they make others. "You have to market yourself. You have to get your name out there. If you don't go to college, how are you going to get a good-paying job, the big house, the expensive new car?"

Being quietly faithful husbands, wives, children, pastors, city council members, employers and employees isn't enough for the worldly-minded. Creating a pious Christian home, raising your children to know and love Christ, being faithful and active members of your congregation, sharing the Gospel with your friends, co-workers, and family as you have opportunity - these are scoffed at. What do they

gain? How much good can they do? When will you ever get to focus on you?

This thinking is idolatrous. It looks at the created things as though they either are the good or the source of good. The disciples measured their ability to feed the people by where they were and what resources they had. They thought of the bread, they thought of the money, they thought of the wilderness. But they thought nothing of the One standing before them who had expressed His deep compassion for the people.

The Lord Jesus is Yahweh who rained down manna in the wilderness six days of every week for forty years! He is the Rock that followed Israel in their wandering from which they received life-giving water in abundance! “How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?” “How can God take care of me when I have no job, my wife is sick, when AI is taking over one industry after another, when providing a Christian education for my children costs so much, when the world around me is sinking into darkness, when everyday I have ten new fires to put out? Jesus, you only gave me seven loaves! What am I supposed to do with that? That’s nothing! It’s not enough! How can I make it in this wilderness with so little?”

Repent. The problem is not in what you think you have or don’t have. The first problem is that you don’t trust the One who gave them to you. You are giving yourself into the world’s way of thinking. You think more of you or something else - money, talent, work, health - is the answer. But all of these things are like the grass of the field - here today and gone tomorrow...including you. Nothing in all of creation is the answer to your problems - any of them. More money will not make things better at home. More health will not mean a better life. More of the right people in authority will not fix our broken and collapsing country.

Christ is the answer. That is part of the point. It wouldn’t have mattered if the disciples had absolutely nothing. Neither the disciples nor the bread nor the fish are God. Jesus alone is God. He is the One who made the disciples and the bread and the fish. He is the One who made you. He is the One who has given you your health and your sicknesses, your talents and your inabilities, your plenty and your lack. He is the One who gave you the parents you have, the spouse you have, the children you have, the congregation you have, the job you have. He is the One who has also taken some of these away from you or withheld some of them from you entirely. But what He has not taken from you is Himself. He is the highest and only good any of us can have. With Him we have everything. Without Him we have nothing.

Many members. One body united in Christ.

Whatever your Lord gives, whatever He withholds, and whatever He takes away all serve one purpose - that you may know and trust in Him alone as God because He is the only One who is. He is the only one who can help you in your time of need. He is the only one who can bestow upon you health, wealth, wisdom, or anything else. And He will if that is what you need and that is what He knows is best.

The second problem is that we believe that anything the Lord has given us is our personal property and therefore can be used to whatever purpose we so choose. What we have so often doesn't seem like enough because we are using it for the wrong things. The disciples had been given those seven loaves because the Lord was going to use them to feed the multitudes and by doing so show us who He is and His character, not just so that the disciples had stuff to snack on whenever they got hungry. We don't have to understand the how or the when. Ours is only to know and to be ever mindful that everything we have including our minds and bodies belong to God. He created them. He poured out His Blood to redeem them. We are merely stewards, blessed with the opportunity to serve in the kingdom of Christ at His pleasure and for His purposes. To fail to do this and to try to live for yourself, according to your own will and desires is only and always destructive. The good and right way to use what God has blessed you with is to use it all to His glory and to serve your neighbor in your various vocations - hearing God's Word, teaching God's Word to your family and caring for them, working diligently and faithfully, supporting the preaching of the Gospel, and caring for those in need.

God doesn't give you money so that you can get more stuff. He gives it to you so that you can provide for your families, your church, and your neighbor. He doesn't give you health so that you can impress everyone with your physique. He gives it to you so that you can protect the weak and care for the sick. He doesn't give you talents and skills so that you can impress people and become famous. He gives them to you so that you can help and teach others like your family, church, and neighbors.

Like the bread and the fish, you and what the Lord has entrusted to you, are sufficient for the duties that the Lord has laid upon you. Don't scoff at them just because in your mind they aren't enough. Don't think for a second that just because you aren't the best at something or because there are people who can do it better, you are free to do nothing. Just as there is no part of your body that is extraneous, you are not extraneous to the body of Christ. Your dismissal of what God has given is an accusation against God that He was wrong when He made you. Do not measure yourself or anyone else or what you have as the world measures them.

Many members. One body united in Christ.

Only trust that what God gives is right and sufficient for His purposes.

Instead of looking at yourself or your bank account, turn your eyes to the One who in love created you and in love redeemed you with His Blood. He is good. He is sufficient. Whatever He gives is right and enough no matter how insignificant it appears to the world. He is the One who, in the midst of this wilderness of sin and death, satisfies every conscience that cringes in terror of God's judgment through the means of grace. Admittedly, the Bible, Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, and the Holy Supper appear insignificant, weak, foolish. Prayer, family devotions, talking about Jesus, reconciling with our neighbor, and memorizing the Small Catechism can sometimes feel like a waste of time. And our flesh is tempted to agree with the world and look instead for seemingly more important, more productive, more "special" things. It is only faith that receives the things of God and trusts that they are more than sufficient because they are what He gave. When your eyes are fixed upon Jesus and your ears are listening attentively to His Word, you won't be bothered by seeming to have or be not enough because you will know that He is more than enough and He will carry out every single good and gracious plan and purpose He has for you, including your eternal salvation.

In the Name of +Jesus.

Pastor Ulmer

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