

## The Seventh Sunday after Trinity, A ✕ D 2009

**Mark 8:1-9** In those days, when again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples to him and said to them, <sup>2</sup>"I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. <sup>3</sup> And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way. And some of them have come from far away." <sup>4</sup> And his disciples answered him, "How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?" <sup>5</sup> And he asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" They said, "Seven." <sup>6</sup> And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and they set them before the crowd. <sup>7</sup> And they had a few small fish. And having blessed them, he said that these also should be set before them. <sup>8</sup> And they ate and were satisfied. And they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. <sup>9</sup> And there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away.

*In the name of the Father and of the ✕ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

1 Take and eat. Out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. Fruit far more delicate and delicious than even the ripest Calhoun peach. And the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. Every plant bearing fruit is for you to eat. Except one. You may eat from any tree in the garden, especially from the tree whose fruit gives life. But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you may not eat. There was nothing lacking, no good thing the Lord held back. When the bellies of Adam and Eve rumbled it was a sure sign that God was providing for their hunger.

2 Take and eat. Into the Lord's perfect creation slinked the serpent, seeking to leave a scar on God's good creatures. The devil cannot create, he can only destroy. Did God really say? pried the devil. You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. Take and eat. So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Their sin began before the eating, though. Adam's first sin was in letting his bride be seduced by the serpent. Hers was in misquoting God. And they both sinned by

wanting to make themselves their own gods. They ate in rebellion and wound up hungrier than before.

3 All of creation felt the sting from their sin. No longer did things work the way they were designed to. Adam's pleasant, easy job of working and keeping the garden is now burdensome and fraught with frustration. Even the ground is cursed because of Adam. No longer would it yield bread naturally and easily. Only with sweat, tears, blood, and occasionally death will the ground submit to Adam. Eve's task took the same twist. Once easy, pain-free, and pleasant, Eve's job of bearing children will likewise cost her much blood, sweat, tears, and occasionally death. How things have changed. Eve and her children are at odds with one another. Bringing forth life now carries the risk of death. And her relationship with Adam is also scarred. Adam and his sons continue to abdicate their authority, while Eve and her daughters strive to be their own heads. Most telling of all, Adam and the very ground from which he was formed are now adversaries.

4 Take and eat, is the devil's jeer to you. Hunger, once a sign of God's perfect provision for humanity, is now a sign of your body's frailty. Once a mark of life, now hunger pangs are a sign of death. Hunger, once a desire that led the man and the woman to the Tree of Life, now is a warning of death. You hunger because you're dying. Your body tells you that you need food in order to survive, to make it to the next day. And you suppose that because your body is hungry, you must feed it. Hunger, once a good desire, has now been twisted by the servant of death, the serpent in the Garden. Your hunger for bread, which is good, turns into gluttony, which are evil. Your hunger for a spouse, which is good, turns into lust and adultery, which are evil. Your hunger for loving dominion over creation, which is good, turns into pride and pursuit of power, which are evil. Your hunger for provision from the Lord, which is good, turns into greed for goods, which is evil. So repent of feeding every evil hunger your body feels.

Repent of quarrelling and fighting over the bread which only brings death. Repent of calling good your hunger for things which are evil. Blessed are those, after all, who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

5 Take and eat is what the crowd of people who followed Jesus to the desolate place failed to do. This isn't a mild distraction that caused them to forget a meal, not merely skipping breakfast to be at Bible class. No, Jesus has their undivided attention. They're so affected by His teaching that nothing else matters to them. Their seemingly foolish love for the Word has quite literally put their lives in peril. They have no food, and if they leave to get food, they'll faint on the way. And knowing even better than they the debilitating pangs of hunger, Jesus had compassion on them. Just as He did for the crowd of five thousand, not even two chapters earlier in the Gospel according to St. Mark, barely four months ago in the Church Year, Jesus gathered what was available. This time He took seven loaves and a few fish. From these He fed the four thousand until they were full, leaving seven baskets full of leftovers. Jesus took bread, and having given thanks, broke it, and gave it to the disciples to distribute. Take and eat, said the Bread of Life to the perishing crowds.

6 This crowd, fed by miraculous bread and fish, fed by the teaching of the Word of God in the Flesh, would nevertheless grow dissatisfied with their Bread King. When the bread ran out while their hunger increased, they would be the crowd who joined in the cheers of "Crucify Him." But, even while feeding them, while curing their hunger, Jesus knew this. Even while providing for your bodily needs, the Lord knows of your rebellious nature. He gives bread to the righteous and to the wicked. And while you were still sinful, still rebellious, still deserving nothing but the wage for your sin—death, Jesus Christ died for you. While He could not help but have compassion on the crowd in their time of hunger, while He cannot but help have compassion on you in times of physical hunger, this Lord came to do more than provide you with more of the bread of death.

7        Take and eat is the invitation from the Bread of Life to you today. This miracle is far greater than the one that only fed four thousand. Then He took the bread of death and produced more of the same. And four thousand went home with bellies full. Now He takes the bread of death, the bread you have labored, sweated, and bled to purchase, and provides you with the Bread of Life, which He labored, sweated, and bled to death to deliver to you. This Bread is His own Body, and this cup contains His true Blood. And for two thousand years, millions have gone home forgiven.

8        This holy meal not only provides you with what you need more than even food and drink, but it also teaches your belly how to hunger. Here you learn to hunger and thirst for righteousness not your own. Here you learn to hunger for food that nourishes you beyond the grave. Here you learn to hunger for the Word of God, both in your ears and the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, in your mouth. Here, those holy hungers are satisfied. Take and eat.

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*Soli Deo Gloria*  
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