

Grace and peace are yours dear friends from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

The gospel continues with the story of the crowd, the five thousand that Jesus fed in the wilderness. The miracle of eating the bread of heaven and fruit from the tree of life satisfies the crowd and there is an abundance that remains. After the crowd consumes the bread of life, the barrage of questions begins and a struggle to understand ensues. Jesus provides answers to their questions that only provoke more discussion, grumblings, and more questions.

Jesus provides the bread of life and still the people fail to see it is Christ among them and fail to significance of their situation. In short, they fail to see the words of the prophets, whom they study and trust, being revealed before their eyes. The Son of God stands among them and yet they are blind to the truth.

This is now the third Sunday to speak to the miracle of Feeding the Five Thousand, and like Elijah, I struggle to find a new message in the context of the same miracle, place, and time that has meaning for you and me today. As my week progressed, I grew weary in search of the words to share today and then I heard “loud and clear” the words of the angel the Lord sent to Elijah; “Get up and eat!”

You see my friends; Elijah had just come through an extreme time of trial. The false prophets of Baal have just been killed. Queen Jezebel is so angry at the death of her prophet that she is now threatening the life of Elijah who is on the run, fatigued, and in complete despair. It is here where Elijah surrenders his life to God and says, “It is enough now, take my life.”

Instead of granting Elijah’s request, God lets him know that his work is not finished and tells him to “Get up and eat”. God again provides what? Bread! The bread of heaven, the bread of life is given to Elijah to continue to do the work God has placed before him. Elijah obeys, but quickly lies down again in despair and without energy or faith to continue. God again commands him to, “Get up and eat”, which then provides both faith and strength for the journey.

God knows and God provides. God does not send His servants out into the world unprepared or unequipped. God sends Elijah forth only when He knows the journey will be successful and when the spiritual and physical strength are sufficient for the task(s) to be completed.

Jesus is preparing the five thousand for what is about to come by providing them with food and faith for the journey they are about to embark upon. The crowd around Jesus in on their feet and ready to more forward, however; their questions make it clear they are unsure of their task or their destination. Even though Jesus is standing before them, God has not revealed the understanding of what Jesus’s words mean; God has not (yet) provided them the faith to ‘see’... because Christ must first ‘die’ at the hands of sinners.

In contrast, Elijah is the faithful servant who has understanding, but has failed in strength and endurance to complete the journey. He is spent, exhausted, and wiped-out; fully aware of God’s plan and purpose, but physically and mentally dried up.

Where is a message for you and me in the Holy Scripture we reflect upon this week? When we search for answers, at times it is necessary to see the meaning in the Old Testament lesson for the sake

of hearing the gospel application for us today. We have faith; like Elijah, God has revealed His plans and purpose for us and it is time for us to: Get Up and Eat!

My friends, when life is challenging, defeating, and exhausting, Get up and Eat! And when you tire easily after getting knocked down so quickly; Get up and Eat AGAIN! And when you struggle to find the courage to take one more try; Get up and Eat AGAIN! Allow God to provide and prepare you for the journey and the tasks He places before you. Remember my friends, this is not your work, but His work that you are called to participate in.

Get up and Eat the bread of life that sustains and supplies ‘strength and endurance’ for the feeding of a world that is hungry; to clothe a world that has nothing to wear; to heal a world that is suffering; to extend compassion, care, and comfort to a world that is hurting. Faith has been granted to you and me in abundance my friends and we see the work of our good and gracious God in the world that is generously created for ‘our lives’ here and now.

God alone grants faith and it is not our place to question why others do not (yet) have the gift of faith. It is our place to listen and hear God calling each of us to participate in the world here and now for the sake of all who are on a journey looking for the ‘Bread’ that we have already eaten, depend upon, and live by. They, like the five thousand, are like sheep without a shepherd; they are searching for you and me to share the Bread of Life with them.

Get up and Eat my friends so you can proclaim to the world the very Good News of what God has done for all people through Jesus Christ our Lord. On Tuesday night, Christ Lutheran Church participated in our first National Night Out, which was an event that exceeded every possibly expectation of seeing what God can provide. Not only did our congregation meet the needs to provide for the event, but also the response from the City of Greensboro was what I consider a miracle.

National Night Out revealed to us that we are not alone in our efforts, but that we are working in our community with others to meet the needs, extend care, provide protection, and offer security to the people we live next to and among each day. Our church may have served ice cream on Tuesday, but the Bread of Life was also abundant at the gathering.

National Night Out is an example of exactly what God is asking us all to do; coming together and supporting one another for the journey we travel along. As children of God, we are all moving forward ‘together; toward our eternal home; hand in hand, and side by side. No one falls behind and no one is left out; no one is forgotten. Everyone is cared for because your faith and compassion has the love, strength, and endurance to ensure we all arrive home safely.

It is NOT enough for you and me today and the time for our rest has not come. There is plenty of work to be done, thousands hungry to eat, and a Kingdom waiting to be fed. The faith we have been provided is alive and able to engage with our tasks and this journey. Get up and eat my very dear friends in Christ; and may the peace that passes all understanding, keep you hearts and minds though Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!