

## PENTECOST 8 (2021)

### Mark 6

**Mark 6:30–44** 30The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. 31And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. 32And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. 33Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. 34When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. 35And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, “*This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. 36Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.*” 37But he answered them, “*You give them something to eat.*” And they said to him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?” 38And he said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go and see.” And when they had found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.” 39Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. 40So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. 41And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. 42And they all ate and were satisfied. 43And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. 44And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.

In the Name of Jesus.

3:00 a.m., someone shakes you awake and asks you quickly, ‘How can YOU be certain that God in heaven never takes His eyes off of YOU—sparkling, smiling

eyes?’

Your answer, dear Lutheran, is this: ‘My pastor fed me Christ’s Body and Blood!’

Or, ‘My pastor absolved me when I confessed my sins!’

Or, ‘Every time you stick my pastor with a pin, out oozes Christ Crucified; I once was far off but have now been brought near by the Blood of Christ!’

Or-even better: ‘I’m not alone when I pray to my Father in heaven—pardon, OUR Father in heaven; I am not alone confessing my sins; I am not alone when I eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ and I shall never perish. Even at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, there’s at least 2 or 3 gathered in the Name of Jesus! My fellow communicants walk me into the kingdom of God, despite me, despite them, despite everything!’

My dear ones, who fed the 5000 men that day, with five loaves and two fish? Jesus sat them down on the green grass. He took the fish poboy fixins and blessed and broke. But then:

He ‘gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And He divided the fish among them all.’

The lines get all blurry between Jesus and His apostles. Praise the Lord. HE feeds—but through THEIR hands. HE gives such a crowd enough to eat with twelve basketsful left over. But He SAY-ED: ‘Y’ALL—Peter, James, John, all twelve—Y’ALL give them something to

eat.’

This is why your poor shepherd pleads with your ears today. Y’all are saddled with a book-ish pastor; but we can learn from books. The Book of Concord has told the world for 500 years now what a Lutheran is: Catholic, without the superstition; apostolic, but we can take or leave those who make themselves big in the Church; mostly, we leave them, his holiness included.

And on the front of your bulletin is our confession about HOW the Holy Spirit brings us—the far-off, pagan, godless nations of the world—near:

## **THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION**

### **V. [THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY]<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments.

<sup>2</sup> Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel.

<sup>3</sup> And the Gospel teaches that we have a gracious God, not by our own merits but by the merit of Christ, when we believe this.

<sup>4</sup> Condemned are the Anabaptists and others<sup>5</sup> who teach that the Holy Spirit comes to us through our own preparations, thoughts, and works without the external word of the Gospel.

So, your pastor’s burden, for you, from your Lord.

Yes, the ‘merit of Christ’ is where faith comes from; the ‘merit of Christ’ is what our faith sits on and rests.

But I don't want y'all to be condemned with the Re-baptizers, the Anabaptists. Another word for such people is 'Enthusiasts.' That means that such people boast about some sort of special Bluetooth connection, directly with Jesus, heaven; it's a moving target. It is not my goal today to condemn all the arenas gatherings in town today, nor the churches that worship a man in Rome, and whatever he makes up about God today.

Don't Y'ALL stand condemned! Yes: the Gospel you hear is the Holy Spirit's life-giving pledge and guarantee—

Yet it is a Gospel that y'all DO hear! Even if it is just through me. And it is also—praise the Lord!—heard FROM YOU, you, you! As you pray with your fellow baptized, sing with them, confess your faith, and converse and console each other as dear brothers and sisters.

Don't let anyone rob you of this comfort!

In order that we poor men—born NOT resting on the merit of Christ, but born and cross-wired to boast about our present and eternal certainties when WE can point to WE and WE can conclude that WE, isolated, on our own, have got great things going on with the unseen God. You can tell a man is an Enthusiast. The clearest evidence is this: other men are hungry, and the Enthusiast does NOT give them something to eat. Men are sick; but the Enthusiast cannot medicate and soothe, but only diagnose and advise. Men are sinful; but the Enthusiast CANNOT call them to turn from their OWN judgments about themselves and

God. No, no! In fact, poor sinners are ALWAYS directed—by those who find the Holy Spirit APART from the Gospel, the Sacraments, the Office of the Holy Ministry, the Church—

All the popular shepherds of the world can do with a poor sinner, is to direct a man who ALREADY feels far from God, and give him advice, rules, laws, coaching, to draw near.

3:00 a.m. Rudely wakened. ‘How are YOU confident about you and God?’

‘The merit of Christ!’ Good answer.

‘The apostles have fed me, through their testimony about Jesus.’ Wonderful.

But if 3:00 a.m. can make us brutally honest with ourselves, we may confess, ‘I am often worried about that. And I do NOT have some special wi-fi connection with heaven that all the loud Christians boast of having, and the pope, and every other religion in the world. I suffer from doubt, and fear. But the Holy Spirit gathers this tiny group of men, women, children, who ALL pray to God the way good two-year-olds do: “YOU, God, will now take orders from ME! Hallow your Name! Bring your Kingdom! Will YOUR will! Feed, forgive, protect, rescue!”

Oh. And the Church did the Holy Spirit’s creative thing: called a man who knows least about God, and put him in a place where we can go, over and over again, and hear, receive, from the OUTSIDE—NOT directed to our INSIDES!—

My pastor absolves me. It's really my Lord Jesus; but the Spirit of Jesus just LOVES to work through means, through men, through angels.'

My dear ones: yes—hear and receive the entire God today in the gifts given in the Church, by the Spirit's people; even the Spirit's shepherd.

And, yes: from that message will grow out—from you!—all sorts of good deeds and happy messages from God Who has drawn near to all men.

But at the same time: do NOT leave here today figuring, 'Now I need to take what I've heard, and stir in my OWN juices and enzymes and commitment—and if I CAN be satisfied with what comes of that, then I can wake at 3:00 a.m. and have no wobbles in my faith.'

No! No, no, no!

HE is your peace. NOT YOU, getting somehow nearer to Him!

HE is your righteousness. NOT...YOU...ape-ing Him in whatever way!

And there is only ONE good reason to call a shepherd and beg the Holy Spirit to chase the shades of night out of him, and show those glorious truths to him—to ME!—that I do not KNOW. Only HE knows them.

And only HE can feed 5000 with so little. Well, His apostles do.

Only HE can make you certain that God's smile will never be wiped off His face, now glued to you.

Well, that's the certainty that your poor pastor gives you today, in the Name of Jesus.