

## The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost (2017)

Now when Jesus heard [about the death of John], he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” **But Jesus said, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.”** They said to him, “We have only five loaves here and two fish.” And he said, “Bring them here to me.” Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Oh, Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!

Good Lord! Good words—how do we say it this fine day? Good words to ‘fill the vacuum?’ After the ‘bad words’ are broomed away? There’s something un-Gospel about that!

No—happier!: Good Lord-Good Words which seem so small—the little word of the Gospel!—but which fells the devil, takes sin away, makes graves beds and death a refreshing nap! A

Word—the Gospel!—which, UNDER...**OUR**...SCRUTINY, our reason, our calculators and brains and plus columns and minus columns; our EX-PERIENCE... this little word not seem quite enough! Like ‘five loaves here and two fish.’ ‘Yes, Lord, forgive my brother—but SEVEN TIMES in one day pushes the limit, yes?!’

No; with the One Whom John the Baptizer foretold, Whom John baptized, over his OWN objections—with THAT King behind the Word of the Gospel:

“they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.”

And the Word goes out!

Hear! The Conqueror has spoken: “Now the foe, Sin and woe, Death and Hell are broken!” God is man, man to deliver, And the Son/Now is One/With our Blood forever!

‘The Lord of Israel, Jesus of Nazareth, our God, our Man, our Brother, our Friend—THIS is what’s good about HIM!: HE will NEVER again waste any words, breath, time, life, EXPLAINING HIMSELF to anyone! And so it is UNIMAGINABLE, my dear Christians, that your Savior, your God, your Father in heaven, will EVER ask YOU for a defense, an explanation for your life!

THAT is not what makes His Spirit Holy, nor why He dwells in you. The Spirit of Jesus rests upon you and me, to FREE US: FREED from all that would drown out our life, our faith, our praise: our record and boast for anyone to hear—heaven, earth, hell!—that EVERYTHING that comes to us comes from the hand of our Heavenly Father. It's all a GIFT! And so, our life INDEED need never be distracted from our happy calling: giving thanks to the One Whose steadfast love endures forever!

The translation makes me smile this week. It's TEN syllables in Psalm 136, over and over:  
 FOR...HIS...STEAD...FAST...LOVE...EN...DURES...FOR...  
 EV...ER. In Hebrew, it's HALF that many: 'Kiy l-olam chasdo!' Five! Perhaps: for HIS GRACE—no end! Been dreaming about a felicitous 5-syllable translation. I'll let you know...

There's Hebrew in the Gospel according to Saint Matthew! You know it well! 'Eli, Eli! Lema sebachthani!' And you know how that translates. 'My God! Out of all men! My God!! Why ME?! Why, if you are going to forsake ANYONE—why would it be me?!'

It was a Friday afternoon.

And, Saint Matthew records no answer from heaven, no explanation—nothing to add to or subtract from what That Man heard the day John TRIED to keep Him from getting in the dirty Jordan with the dirty sinners. 'This is my Son—I'm attached to This Man! And I am so happy with Him! Look at Him there with those others, confessing their sins! Well done! Heaven is well pleased!'

This Man went about healing, then miraculously feeding, after He had heard about the death of John the Baptizer. We heard last week in church about our training as disciples—Jesus calls us ‘scribes catechized in the kingdom of heaven.’ And He says that we not only bring out of the storeroom NEW things—the Gospel of dropped defenses, explanations!—but also things old! The LAW has its place in our lives, correcting and guiding and condemning us, until the End. It was for the Law that John was in prison.

Could he have BEEN more CONTEMPORARY?! Saying to the rich and powerful of his day: No....! You CANNOT take another man’s wife for your own. No....! Not your brother’s neither!’

‘OFF with his head!’ Twitter exploded back then! And Jesus’ reaction?

Human! He shrunk back, away! And your poor pastor will sleep tonight! He’s just like us; but He’s not like us at all. But when the crowd found Him, He was nothing but compassion.

The CROWD, Saint Matthew records, was stirred up by the best of the best to cry for His crucifixion. Now it doesn’t need to be exactly the same people as He fed. But it was the ‘crowd,’ the apostle records. And He also recorded the amazement of the corrupt gub’ment man:

<sup>11</sup> Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus said, “You have said so.” <sup>12</sup> But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer. <sup>13</sup> Then Pilate said to him, “Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?” <sup>14</sup> But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed. <sup>1</sup>

‘The governor was greatly amazed!’ Yah! So am I! If ANYONE has the skill, the words, the power, the smarts to talk Himself out of that situation, it was our Lord! Why no answer, Friday morning? The same reason He received no answer Friday ‘roud three! Because He insisted on pleasing heaven; insisted on being baptized with the crowd; insisted on bringing among men a righteousness which is APART from THE...LAW!

‘Should we fear our God’s displeasure, Who, to save, Freely gave/His most precious treasure? To redeem us He has given/His own Son/From the throne/Of His might in heaven!

My dear ones: there is NOTHING uniquely Christians, saving, Gospel, about a story of a man who feeds lots with little. All of man’s fictional religions have such stories. What makes this whole thing part of the Good News according to Saint Matthew, is that RIGHT THERE—right when This Man had every reason to leave Herod and court, Pilate and soldiers, Pharisees, scribes, Sadducees, and us in the crowd—when He had every justification to leave us to EXPLAIN ourselves, as in the Garden, “Adam, what have you done?”....

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<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Mt 27:11–14). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

He instead took what His best trained concluded was next to nothing useless, and ignored THEIR estimations, and prayed and broke. The GOSPEL part of this GOSPEL lesson is where He says to those who have NO faith in Him, in His Word, in what He was SENT FOR: YOU do it! YOU give them something to eat! Who? Those right here in front of you, who are hungry.

‘See the Lamb, our sin once taking/To the cross, Suff’ring loss/Full atonement making. For our life His own He tenders, And His grace/All our race/Fit for glory renders!

For what ELSE have YOU been baptized, dear Christian? Don’t get distracted! Not by men’s OMISSIONS nor by their COMMISSIONS. ‘Shoulda thought about eating b’fo y’ lef’ da HOUSE today, hmmmnnn?!’ Poor planning on YOUR part does NOT create an EMERGENCY on MY part!

Now it does! This is the heaven for which you have been fit! The heaven that Jesus will hand over to His Father after His Judgment this morning, or today at three; soon. And what will be His judgment? ‘You forsook ME—so ALL THAT is ALL OVER now! And I present to you those who have no excuse for themselves; and who’ve been instructed never to explain themselves to heaven, ever again; because now I am one of them, heaven IS sinful earth, and God is Man, man to deliver!’

And you, man, woman, child, have been baptized and filled with His Spirit to shake off of you forever YOUR insistence that the next man, woman, child EXPLAIN himself, EXCUSE herself, PERSUADE you that they are worth your bother. And here’s the

KICKER! The MORE that we USED TO require men to give us, to TALK US INTO us attaching ourselves to them, loving them, the MORE...NOW...we've been put right where we are, with the people we've been put there with: for THEM! To call THEM into our song of thanksgiving and praise: The Lord is Good! ALL that comes to us comes as GIFT from HIS Hand!

And to let every ear and eye ready to indict us for our lousy Christianity—to make sure the whole PACKAGE that's US is nothing but GIFT: He GIVES US today what the Church has called 'THE Thanksgiving!' 'The Eucharist!' His Body and His Blood.

Which then say to us—if we still have a list an arm long of those we'd like to put in their place with OUR explanations, or demanding excuses and apologies from THEM, to satisfy US—

For us, for those times we live as if we've never been baptized at all!--His Body and His Blood say, 'Let's says that MY being forsaken is all the forsaken-ness ANYONE is going to need!'

You don't need to explain yourself to your God today, my friends! Me neither! Not our breaking of the Ten Commandments; nor our lousy faith and subsequent love! He stopped looking for that a long time ago. The day He refused to EXPLAIN why the Holy Son was forsaken for those far from holy. To leave us with nothing but this:

Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His steadfast love endures forever in the Name of Jesus! Amen!