

Grace Lutheran Church, Wichita Kansas 3 of August 2014 Mt. 14.13

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A wise ruler, King Solomon, once wrote this proverb, "When you sit down to eat with a ruler, pay close attention to what is before you." Ruler Solomon hosted some pretty large, and lavish, dinner parties, though probably none as large, as at least two, served by Jesus.

Our Gospel lesson this day records that first feeding. 5000 men gathered around Ruler Jesus' 'table' in a wilderness area. There were probably that many women and maybe even more children. All were hungry. It was late. One boy had brought food. Five small breads and two fish. The practical question was asked "How could this little, feed so many?" But, how many of this huge dinner party were considering Solomon's proverb? To "pay close attention to what was before them?" and "with whom they were eating?" Probably very few!

OK, how many of you will come to this table, to this "hillside" altar, considering that you are "dining with a Ruler" or even "dining ON the Ruler?" I pray, all of you will!

- I pray that you all come craving the heavenly food.
- I pray that you all kneel humbly in adoration of Jesus your Ruler.
- I pray that you all stick out your tongue and swallow Holy Food from Calvary.
- I pray that you all return to your pew full of wonder to the Ruler who has lavished such love upon you.
- I pray that you all desire to come again quickly, even tomorrow, for this is the feast that sets you free from sin's power!

The feast of the 5000 in this wilderness with Ruler Jesus was not just Jesus providing food for their bellies. That's all they thought it was. Yes, it was that, but there was more. How do we know? We know from the Bible. In Mark's Gospel, this feeding of the 5000 is a chapter away from another feeding--that of the 4000. These two feedings are connected by St. Mark to another day, when the Twelve had nothing to eat and complain. Jesus is a little angry with His Chosen Twelve. Listen carefully to His comments and admonitions to His Apostles:

*Now they (the Twelve) had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. And [Jesus] cautioned them saying, "Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? **When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?**" They said to [Jesus], **"Twelve."** And the seven [loaves] for the four thousand, now many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" And they said to him, **"Seven."** And He said to them, **"Do you not yet understand?"***

And the words of Jesus to Satan should ring in our ears, "Man does not live by bread alone." Want more evidence that the feeding of the 5000 and the feeding of the 4000 were more than getting a free lunch? Listen to this commentary, from the pen of St. John, on the free-lunch-for-5000-miracle:

*When [the Twelve] found [Jesus] on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. **Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.**"*

Jesus was not only the true Prophet coming into the world, He was the true Bread coming into the world. Moses supplied manna. Jesus supplies His Body. Moses' guests died. Those dining on Jesus eat of Him and never die!

Do you believe this? Some who heard these explanations of the feeding of the 5000 didn't believe it. St. John writes that some of the Jews disputed among themselves as to how Jesus could give them HIS FLESH to eat. Jesus explains. "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life."

You will never be given this kind of "eating advice" from your dietitian from your doctor or from Michelle Obama. We are bombarded today with helps on healthful eating. **Eat this. Avoid that. Eat smaller portions more often. Never skip breakfast. Drink 8 glasses of water daily. Don't eat after eight in the evening.** Here's some helpful "eating advice" from our Lutheran Confessions regarding the eating of the Sacrament:

Now examine.....the efficacy and benefits on account of which really the Sacrament was instituted. This is My body and blood, given and shed FOR YOU, for the remission of sins. Briefly that is as much as to say: For this reason we go to the Sacrament because there we receive such a treasure by and in which we obtain forgiveness of sins.....On this account it is indeed called a FOOD OF SOULS, which nourishes and strengthens the new man. Therefore it is given for a DAILY PASTURE AND SUSTENANCE, that faith may refresh and strengthen itself so as not to fall back in such a battle, but become ever stronger and stronger. (LC, Sacrament of the Altar, par. 20ff.)

Behold the strengthening of faith that occurs when the Lord's Supper is offered! Oh to God that Grace Lutheran were to offer it as, our Confessions say, 'a daily pasture and sustenance.' Not as a law, but as a gift. Not to show off, not to boast, not to use it as an emotional vitamin, but because it is the active work of God in feeding, refreshing and nourishing us in the one true faith.

Martin Luther did not have to restore the Lord's Supper to the Church. It was there. Sundays. Festivals. Other days during the week. Luther had to restore the liturgy and the preached word. Our Lutheran churches have much to do now, in restoring the place of the Lord's Supper in each of her Divine Services.

When you kneel today to eat with the Ruler at His Altar, at His hillside, pay close attention to what is before you. Remember what you receive. Remember your need. Remember who feeds you. Take. Eat. Drink. It is Jesus Christ for you. IJN. Amen.