

Pentecost 7 – Proper 11 (7/19/09 – *God Graciously Provides All You Need*)

In the Name JESUS. [Amen]

God Graciously Provides All You Need. That is what the *Holy Gospel* for today – *Jesus’ Feeding of the Five Thousand* – teaches you. Jesus’ concern for the well-being of His tired Apostles ... His compassion on the multitudes whom He saw as ***sheep without a shepherd*** ... the miraculous multiplication of the five loaves and two fish ... the twelve baskets of leftovers – also the *Old Testament* and *Epistle* for this day ... the *INTROIT* ... and the appointed *Psalm* (PSALM 23 ... though we didn’t hear it or speak it) – it all points to the blessed truth that ***God Graciously Provides All You Need.*** He always has – He always will. There is continuity and consistency in God’s gracious provision for you – indeed, for the whole world ... and that’s how you know that ***God Graciously Provides All You Need.***

You open Your hand; You satisfy the desire of every living thing. That’s what our *antiphon* (PSALM 145.16) reminds us. It is part of our regular table prayer here. Maybe you recall how that starts: ***The eyes of all look to You [O LORD], and You give them their food in due season*** [145.15]. **Our** eyes look to the Lord as the Provider of what we need in this life ... both for body and for soul – often, at least. But we must admit that sometimes – too often – we **don’t** look to the Lord as we ought. We forget about Him. We take His daily provision – His ***daily bread*** – for granted. Even when we pray the *LORD’S PRAYER* daily, our selfish, sinful flesh forgets where our daily bread – and every other provision of body and soul – comes from. When you see the stock boy (or girl) at Stater Bros. or Wal-Mart, do you think of them as instruments by which ***God Graciously Provides All You Need?*** Probably not – but that’s how our *Gospel* would teach us to look at those whom the Lord uses to distribute His bounty. Just like our Lord Jesus worked through His Apostles to ***set before the people*** the five loaves and the two fish – ***And they all ate and were satisfied*** [MK 6.41, 42] – so also through the farmers, pickers, truckers, stockers, cashiers, and managers ***God Graciously Provides All You Need.*** And it is the same in every aspect of your life – both your physical and your spiritual life.

But how often do we think of these things? How often do we recognize and believe what we prayed in the *COLLECT*? ***Heavenly Father, though we do not deserve Your goodness, still You provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may acknowledge Your gifts, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience.*** For what is it but to believe when we acknowledge God’s gifts? And what is it but right praise when we give thanks to God for all His benefits of body and soul? And what is it but faith active in love when we willingly serve God in obedience to His Word and will? Yet we so often

falter at these things.

We look around us – at the state of our economy ... local, state, national, international – and wonder whether or not God will indeed provide all that we need. We doubt His goodness. We doubt His goodwill toward us. We doubt His ability to provide in the midst of a deep economic recession. We worry and fret – we despair – as if Christ did not actually multiply five loaves of bread and two fish to feed five thousand men (plus women and children) ... totaling upwards of perhaps 15,000. Would we make God and the evangelists He inspired to write what happened into liars? For though the miracle may not be as obvious, it is nevertheless God's miraculous power at work to put food on our tables every day. Or do you not *hope in His steadfast love*? Was it only “back then” that God provided despite seemingly impossible circumstances?

Then, after doubting God – or forgetting about Him altogether – we go looking in all the wrong places for a solution: our government, our financial advisors, ourselves. And when we **do** have all that we need – when there **is** enough food on the table, clothes on our back, and a roof over our heads, we forget that **God** has provided it – we give the credit to others ... to those who were merely God's instruments ... or to ourselves (for our own ingenuity and work in acquiring such things). And we go our merry ways – doing whatever **we** want. Which is to say that we **fail** to acknowledge **God's** gifts, we **fail** to give Him thanks for all **His** benefits, and we **fail** to serve **Him** in willing obedience. And just as we once were, so we would make ourselves again and again; namely: *separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world* [EPH 2.12].

Our hope – our **only** hope ... our only true, steadfast hope – is that God continues to be faithful to His Word and promises ... that God continues to be a good and faithful shepherd to us sheep ... that God continues to set over us shepherds who care for us ... that God Himself tends us, shepherds us, saves us, leads us back to the green pastures and the still waters of His Word and Sacraments, by which He restores our souls and leads us in paths of righteousness for His own Name's sake [JER 23.1-6; PSA 23] ... just as He has been steadfast in the past. Our only hope is our Shepherd-LORD, the Savior Jesus Christ – Who watches over both body and soul ... Who gives us rest from the trials and tribulations (and even from the demanding goodness) of life ... Who has reconciled us *to God in one body through the Cross* ... Who has brought us near to God by His Blood [EPH 2.16, 13] ... Who is, indeed, *The LORD our Righteousness* [JER 23.6] ... by Whom we *have access in one Spirit to the Father* ... and are made *fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of*

God ... in Whom we are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit [EPH 2.18, 19, 22].

Our hope and *help is in the Name of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth* [PSA 128.8]. The Lord Who opens His hand to satisfy the desire – the need – of every living thing. For our steadfast, loving God **does** provide for us – daily, weekly, yearly, throughout all our lives. It is He Who graciously knit us in the womb – and brought us forth, safely, into His creation. It is He Who *covers the heavens with clouds ... prepares rain for the earth ... makes grass grow on the hills ... gives to the beasts – and us – their food; and to the young ravens that cry* [PSA 147.8-9]. And He promises that it is **not** on the basis of **our** merits ... **our** strength ... **our** ability to help ourselves – that’s why our *INTROIT* says: *His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor His pleasure in the legs of a man* [147.10] ... which is to say, that God doesn’t base His gracious provision on **our** power and might – but rather out of steadfast love ... to **all** ... the strong (beasts) and weak (young ravens) alike ... especially to *those who fear Him ... who hope in His steadfast love* [147.11] (which is to say, who believe and trust in Him).

Does this mean that by faith in Christ we are exempted from all the problems of life ... that we won’t have difficulties? By no means. But it does mean that we don’t need to be concerned. We work ... diligently – for the Scripture also says: *If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.* [2TH 3.10]. But we recognize that ultimately it is **all** God ... from beginning to end. We acknowledge **His** gifts, give thanks for all **His** benefits, and serve **Him** (and our neighbor in His Name) in willing obedience. And when all is said and done, we say: *We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty* [LK 17.10]. We take no credit ... we harbor no pride ... we don’t think more highly of ourselves than we ought – but rather in the humbleness exemplified by our Lord, we give all the glory to God and receive from His bountiful goodness in God-given and God-sustained faith.

Even when we *walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil* ... knowing that God is with us ... to comfort us ... preparing a table for us in the presence of our enemies, filling our cup of salvation to overflowing with His forgiveness, life, and salvation [PSA 23.4-5]. And it is, after all, **only** a shadow of death – for the real death, eternal death, has been removed from us by the very real death **and resurrection** of our Lord Jesus Christ on our behalf. All that’s left is a shadow for us – a death that is really a portal to eternal life ... when we *shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever* [23.6].

Likewise in the Church – especially in the Church – **God** receives all the credit and glory and thanks. It is **God Himself** Who baptized us and placed His Name on us – though our parents or grandparents carried us in their arms to the Font and the

Pastor poured water over us in Trinitarian fashion, saying: *I baptize you in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit* according to Christ's command. It is **God Himself** Who says: *I forgive you all your sins* – though you hear the voice of your Pastor speaking those gracious words. It is **God Himself** Who proclaims to you His Word ... Who preaches to you His Gospel – though you do not see Him. It is **Christ Himself** Who administers His Holy Sacrament ... placing His very own Body and Blood there for the forgiveness of all your sins ... giving Himself and all His benefits to you – though your eyes see only bread and wine distributed by your Pastor. For just as certain as it was the Lord Jesus Christ Who fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fish, so it is the Lord Jesus Christ Who feeds you and sustains you ... body and soul ... giving you His very own life through the Means of His Grace. And so it is, indeed, that ***God Graciously Provides All You Need.***

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