

I.N.I.

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
July 27, 2014
Matt 14:13-21

In Christ Jesus, our Savior who meets all of our needs of both body and soul, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Was Jesus a great teacher or a great leader, a great preacher or a great miracle-worker, a great Prophet or a great Rabbi? As we read and study God's Word we are shown time and time again that Jesus was more than just a one-dimensional Savior—He was and is the all-around, all-purpose Savior, in a league, in a class all by Himself. He is the God-Man, the almighty Lord, the one and only Savior of all of mankind. He can and did do it all, perfectly!

And that is what we learn from our sermon text this morning--that Jesus is

OUR ALL-SUFFICIENT SAVIOR!

I: He provides for our spiritual needs.

II: He provides for our physical needs.

The main reason Jesus performed miracles was to prove that He was indeed this all-sufficient Savior, the Son of God, true God in human flesh and blood. And in these miracles we also see the great love and compassion that Jesus has for suffering human beings.

This famous miracle marks the beginning of a new period in Jesus' public ministry. It was now only a little more than a year until His crucifixion. He has been publicly preaching for over 2 years. For the next year He would still meet the crowds to teach and to heal, but more and more often He would withdraw to remote places with His disciples for the purpose of gradually preparing them for His death—the climax, the fulfillment of His mission here on earth—to redeem mankind by His suffering, dying by crucifixion and rising again from the dead.

After hearing about the beheading of John the Baptist, Jesus got into a boat with His disciples to be alone with them and crossed over to the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. But when the crowds of people heard this, they followed Him on foot—traveling along the shoreline so that when Jesus landed on the other side He saw a large crowd of people coming toward Him. We are told that when He saw this large crowd He was moved with compassion for them.

Jesus had come to this solitary place for peace and quiet; for rest and relaxation with His disciples. How would you feel if you were a doctor and you went on vacation and your patients followed you; or if you were a teacher and your students followed you, or a pastor and your members followed you---all wanting, needing you to heal them, teach them, preach to them? How many of us would say: "Don't bother me now. I'm on vacation. Can't it wait? Come see me when I get back."

But not Jesus! This is why He had come into the world. As we said Matthew reports that Jesus was moved with compassion. Mark writes that Jesus looked upon the people as sheep without a shepherd, lost and wandering. The way Jesus looks upon us human beings is so much different from that of any other person. His feelings for sinful, lost mankind are more than just sympathy for sick, hungry people; they are feelings from a perfect heart that moved Him.

The word compassion literally means; "His inwards were moved." His compassion for these lost sheep moved Jesus not only to heal them and feed them on this particular day, but His compassion also moved Him to willingly give Himself as the sacrifice for the sins of all people; willingly caused Him to go to the cross and lay down His life for you, for me and for all people.

In spite of His need for rest and His desire to be alone with his disciples, Jesus spent the day—**TEACHING THEM MANY THINGS; SPEAKING TO THEM ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HEALING THOSE WHO WERE IN NEED OF HEALING.**

Notice how Jesus meets their needs. In John's Gospel we are told that the people followed Jesus "**BECAUSE THEY SAW HIS SIGNS WHICH HE PERFORMED ON THOSE WHO WERE DISEASED.**" But Jesus saw in them a far greater disease—the disease of sin. And so He put first things first and spent the day instructing the people, revealing to them truths about the Kingdom of God. He first fed their souls with the Bread of Life: His Word. What a day-long

wondrous meal that must have been! Then He healed them, and then He physically fed them.

Remember Jesus said in His Sermon on the Mount: **SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED TO YOU.** That's the lesson that Jesus sought to teach the crowd on that day when He first nourished their souls and then sent them home with both happy and blessed hearts and souls as well as full stomachs. And that is one of the lessons we learn from our sermon text this morning also. Jesus' first and foremost concern for us is for our spiritual welfare. He has met and provided for all of our spiritual needs.

We were dead in sins, miserable lost creatures, unable to save ourselves, headed for eternal damnation in hell. We were like lost sheep ready to plunge over the cliff of eternal death. He came to rescue us, to save us.

We needed forgiveness; He earned it for us.

We needed righteousness; He provided it by His own righteousness—a perfect life of obedience. We needed to be set free; He redeemed us.

We needed to be ransomed; He paid the price.

We needed peace; He brought about peace with our Father through His peace offering on the cross.

We needed life and immortality; he raised Himself from the dead and lives forevermore to assure us of a resurrection to eternal life.

We need strength and courage to face the trials, temptations and troubles of life; He is our strength and through His promises in His Word He gives us the courage to declare: **I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME!** We can confidently say with the Apostle Paul, **NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.**

And since He has done this great, loving act of saving us by living, dying and rising again we can be assured that Jesus can meet and provide for all of our physical needs as well. Jesus did heal the sick and diseased on that day and when it became late and the people were hungry with no place to go for food Jesus also provided for that. But not before He laid a test upon His disciples. Matthew summarizes that test with these words: **WHEN IT WAS EVENING, HIS DISCIPLES CAME TO HIM, SAYING, "THIS IS A DESERTED PLACE, AND THE HOUR IS ALREADY LATE. SEND THE MULTITUDES AWAY, THAT THEY MAY GO INTO THE VILLAGES AND BUY THEMSELVES FOOD." BUT JESUS SAID TO THEM, "THEY DO NOT NEED TO GO AWAY. YOU GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT."**

All the disciples could scrounge up were five loaves of bread and two fish. A measly amount even for the 12 of them. In Mark's Gospel we are told that the disciples calculated that it would take 200 days wages to feed such a large crowd of people. Jesus' command: **"YOU GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT"** left them totally helpless and lost and Jesus wanted them to feel that way. He wanted them to realize that they could not do it, they could not feed all of them, they could not provide for their needs, but He could! He wanted them to realize how totally helpless they really were; not only in feeding all of these people but in taking care of their own needs both spiritual and physical. He wanted them to look alone to Him to provide for them, to see in Him their help, their deliverance. But they disappointed their Savior.

They forgot all of the other miracles Jesus had already performed in the past—like the first one changing water into wine at the wedding in Cana. If Jesus could do that, couldn't He provide enough food to feed this large crowd? They did not learn from the past lessons!

Their answer to Jesus shows both a lack of faith and a spirit of despair: **"WE HAVE HERE ONLY FIVE LOAVES AND TWO FISH."** And in the Gospel of John we see that Andrew added, **"BUT WHAT ARE THEY AMONG SO MANY?"**

What we see here is a reflection of ourselves. So many times in our lives we too, fail to trust the Lord and His promises to help us in any and all of our needs, in every situation in life. Instead we look at the problem as being insurmountable, impossible to overcome.

In few and simple words Matthew describes this marvelous miracle. The crowd is seated. Jesus takes the loaves and the fish, gives thanks for them with a prayer of blessing and then proceeds to

hand out the food; and hand out the food; and hand out the food; till everyone was full. The word for full in the Greek is one that is used for feeding and fattening up an animal. They were filled! All 5,000 men, not counting the women and children. And there were 12 baskets left over! Amazing!

Jesus is our All-Sufficient Savior! He loves us dearly and cares for all of our needs. Do we have our own physical, emotional, financial, spiritual problems? Do we have loved ones who are going through illnesses, diseases or other troubles in life? Are we facing mounting concerns about bills, aging, relationships or a host of other problems? May we not be like the disciples who despaired, but may we first run to Jesus and His Word for help, knowing that we cannot solve the problems, we cannot cure the ills, we cannot remove the sins, but Jesus has and does. **“CAST ALL YOUR CARE UPON HIM, FOR HE CARES FOR YOU.”**

This miracle underscores what we read last Sunday in our second Scripture reading, Paul’s words from Romans 8: **WHAT THEN SHALL WE SAY TO THESE THINGS? IF GOD IS FOR US, WHO CAN BE AGAINST US? HE WHO DID NOT SPARE HIS OWN SON, BUT DELIVERED HIM UP FOR US ALL, HOW SHALL HE NOT WITH HIM ALSO FREELY GIVE US ALL THINGS?**

Jesus met our greatest need when He came into this world as our Substitute. He lived perfectly for us; He died as our perfect sacrifice. His righteousness is ours, while our sins are His. His death brought us life. And He continues to meet our spiritual needs through the Holy Spirit He has sent who works through His powerful Word.

The same Savior who fed this large hungry crowd with a meager supply of bread and fish is the same one who still says to you and to me: **“I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE. HE WHO COMES TO ME SHALL NEVER HUNGER, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME SHALL NEVER THIRST.”**

What a blessing that this morning, we have received this special spiritual meal—His Gospel through the Absolution, the Scripture readings and the sermon text for the nourishing of our souls. And what a blessing to know that Jesus can and will provide for all of our physical needs as well, as He wills.

May we eat and drink to our fill of this spiritual food for our soul’s sake.

*Feed Thy children, God most holy, Comfort sinners poor and lowly;
O Thou Bread of Life from heaven, Bless this food Thou here hast given!
As these gifts the body nourish, May our souls in graces flourish
Till with saints in heav’nly splendor at Thy feet due thanks we render.*

Amen.