

“Man Does Not Live By Bread Alone”

Deuteronomy 8:1-10

“And He humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that **man does not live by bread alone**, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”

When you look at the wonderful harvest season we just had and the stock market hitting record highs in recent days, you would think that life in America and around the world has never been better – there would be peace and harmony flowing throughout the land.

Then you watch the news and we are told that we live in a world full of discord and chaos, and those extra dollars created on Wall Street haven't found their way into the wallets of the people heading to the grocery store. And that by some economic metrics, real wages are less than they were in the early 1970's. We hear again and again that people are angry. Angry people generally find it difficult to be thankful. Don't be angry. Find contentment, because that is what God desires for you. And without contentment you will never find joy and thanksgiving in this life.

We hear the outcry, our leaders have let us down. The government has let us down. Our state is going bankrupt. The one good thing about

living in a world where the media and the powers-that-be have all but abandoned God as being tangibly present is that I haven't heard God getting the blame for what has happened in our country or around the world. I suppose that is a silver lining.

And God does not deserve the blame. Chaos, destruction, war, famine, and pestilence, like death are the wages of sin. Now this doesn't mean that God isn't in control. All things happen according to His good and gracious will. And we pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

In our Old Testament reading, we heard of how God humbled and disciplined the Israelites for 40 years. God allowed them to get hungry, then He provided manna. God allowed them to get thirsty, then He had Moses bring forth water from a rock. Having traveled in the wilderness of that region, dying of thirst or starvation would have been a real fear. It is barren. You can drive for miles and miles and see nothing green. For the Israelites, survival was only possible because God was providing for His children.

Nothing has changed. Without God providing for us; without His angels defending us from all that Satan would do to torment us, we would have nothing – no food, no water, no life. Even worse, we would have no hope for salvation or the life to come.

When difficult times come, when God proverbially allows us to get hungry, do not discount the idea that this is God's way of humbling His children. So if anyone would say we have less for which to be thankful, or if they are angry because they don't have as much money with which to buy

Christmas presents, such a person should ponder what winter will be like for the Christians in Aleppo, Syria or Mosul, Iraq. If your entire reality revolves around that which is material, then you don't understand what is truly important.

The reality is, especially for God's people, that genuine thankfulness increases as things get taken away. One of my favorite quotes is from Dick Cavett who once said, "Health, wealth, and sleep are three things only truly appreciated after they are interrupted." It's very true. Think about it.

As God's people, we are to have a different view than what you hear in the media when it comes to that for which we are thankful. When there is chaos or loss in our life, when God proverbially allows us to get hungry, this gives us an opportunity to share with the world what the response is that Christians have to difficult times. Like Paul, we are to be content in every situation – whether we are hungry or if we have plenty.

The reality is, that in the near future, tomorrow in particular, hunger is not going to be an issue for any of us who are here tonight. Now that doesn't mean that there is not real hunger in this world – even in our own community. We gather food for Quanada and St. John's Food Pantry for a reason. But I know in my case, as you can tell, I haven't missed too many meals.

What would the outcry be in our society if mainstream America actually started experiencing hunger? It is a frightening thought. But our prayer must not change: "Give us this day our daily bread."

But if we really want to look at true hunger and thirst, don't look at the quantity of food and drink consumed. Rather, look at hunger and thirst from a spiritual point of view.

Christ is the Bread, the manna that came down from heaven. He is the Bread of Life, and the vast majority of our world, spiritually starving as they are, pass Him by looking for something else to fill them. And they grumble, and they murmur, and they get angry as the Israelites did those 40 years in the wilderness, because those outside the Kingdom of God cannot find peace and hope and contentment.

And just like with those grumbling, angry, complaining Israelites, God provides daily bread for them all – even to all evil people, as Luther says in the Catechism.

The better news is God provides the Bread of Life – offers it even to all sinful people. And even though we sometimes grumble and complain, even get angry (forgive us Lord), He is leading us into the Promised Land.

Thanksgiving Day is associated with having a feast. And tomorrow, we will feast and give thanks to God for all those things listed in Luther's Catechism – clothing and shoes, food and drink, etc.

But there is a greater feast to come. And at that coming, even all evil people will see why, in this life, God's children can have peace and hope and contentment even when our grocery bills go up. Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Amen.