

The 9th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
August 2, 2020
PROPER 13

The Lessons: Isaiah 55:1-5
 Psalm 136:1-9
 Romans 9:1-13
 Matthew 14:13-21

The Hymns: # 625 (1-3) "Lord Jesus Christ, Life-Giving Bread"
 # 602 (1-6) "The Gifts Christ Freely Gives"
 # 919 (1, 2, 6) "Abide, O Dearest Jesus"

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; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

The Sermon:

Sermon Text: Matthew 14:13-21

'It's Possible'

"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 the village to buy food for themselves.'"

Dear friends in Christ Jesus, our Lord,

The 14th chapter of St. Mathew's Gospel, which comes just before today's text, begins with Jesus hearing the news about the death of John the Baptist, and it's understandable that He wanted to get away for awhile. Jesus and John met for the first time when they were still in their mothers' wombs.

Mary, while pregnant with Jesus, went to a town in Judah to visit Elizabeth, who was pregnant with John. When Mary arrived and greeted her, John leaped in Elizabeth's womb. The Holy Spirit revealed to Elizabeth and her unborn baby that the fullness of time had come and they were in the presence of the yet-to-be-born promised Messiah. This was the beginning of Jesus' relationship with John. Jesus would later say that among those born of women there is no one greater than John. John baptized Jesus. They were deeply connected.

When Jesus heard about the death of John, He withdrew in a boat to a desolate place by Himself. This was devastating news. But the crowds wanted more from Jesus so they followed Him on foot from the towns. When Jesus went ashore He saw the great crowd. There were thousands of people who wanted to see and hear more from Him.

Jesus was in great distress over John's death and dealing with a great crowd of people was likely the last thing He wanted to do. But, He set aside His own needs and had compassion on the crowds of

people and healed their sick. What a scene this must have been! What joy and wonder and hope the great crowd must have experienced as they witnessed Jesus perform the miraculous healings!

As all of this was going on, when it was evening, the disciples recognized that there was a problem. They were in the middle of nowhere and they didn't have enough food to feed all of the people. In fact, they hardly had enough food to just feed themselves. This was a real situation. Things can get ugly when people are hungry and it had already been a long day. So, the disciples went to Jesus to share with Him their concern. It's a desolate place. The day is over and the night had come. The crowd of thousands was hungry and they didn't have anything to feed them.

To address the situation, the disciples asked Jesus to send the crowd away to the villages. Tell them to go buy food for themselves before things get out of hand, they suggested. But Jesus had another solution and it was simple. Showing compassion for the crowd He responded, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat."

This seemed impossible to the disciples. They only had five loaves of bread and two fish and there wasn't any way to get more food. There was no market close by and Skip the Dishes had not yet been invented.

But the seeming impossibility of the situation didn't stop Jesus from showing His compassion. He told the disciples to bring the bread and fish to Him and then He ordered the crowd of people to sit on the grass. 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. With the five loaves of bread and two fish, thousands of people ate and were satisfied and there were twelve baskets full of food left over. What a marvel! What a great reminder that with God all things are possible.

It seemed to be an impossible situation for God's people when they were stuck between Pharaoh's army and the Red Sea. Yet, God miraculously parted the sea so that they could safely pass through.

It seemed impossible to God's people when they wandered in the wilderness with nothing to eat. Yet, God miraculously provided manna from heaven to keep them alive.

It seemed impossible to the disciples when Jesus took His last breath on the cross and was buried in a tomb. Yet, He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures and He appeared to Cephas, the twelve, and many others (1 Corinthians 15:3-5).

It might seem impossible to us that simple words spoken, read, and meditated upon can actually give us the faith that receives God's salvation that is recorded in it. Yet, through the Gospel, the Holy Spirit enables us to believe in God's promise of new life on the basis of Christ's death and resurrection. Scripture reveals to us that "...Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).

It might seem impossible to us that simple water being poured over someone's head does anything more than make them wet. Yet, through the waters of our baptism, God works the forgiveness of our sins, rescues us from death and the devil, and gives us eternal salvation. Jesus says in the last chapter of Mark: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16).

It might seem impossible to us that a sinful man speaking words of forgiveness has the power to do anything. Yet, Jesus breathed on his disciples and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them..." (John 20:23). So when a pastor speaks to you words of forgiveness in Jesus' stead, your sins are forgiven as from God himself.

It might seem impossible to us that eating bread and drinking wine does anything more than fill our stomachs a bit. Yet, Jesus promises us that the bread is His true body and the wine is His true blood and that through them we receive the forgiveness of sins, life with God now and salvation everlasting, and He strengthens us for new life in Him.

It might seem impossible that we will ever again see our loved one who died or that we will overcome our own death. Yet, we learn from God's Word: "Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

Dear friends, things might seem as impossible to us today as it seemed to the disciples when Jesus told them to feed thousands of people with five loaves of bread and two fish. You might be experiencing things in your life today that leave you wondering if it will ever be possible to overcome. Commend everything to God, trusting in his mercy. You are not alone and He will see you through. Jesus promises, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). So we can confidently say "the Lord is my helper; I will not fear."

Our gracious Lord has had compassion on you and He has provided everything you need for both body and soul for this life and for eternity. Just as God miraculously fed the great crowd with five loaves of bread and two fish, so He feeds you now with the Bread of Life that gives you life everlasting. It's not possible for us, but it is possible with God. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.