

Pentecost 10-August 1, 2021

Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish

Exodus 16:2-4, 9-15 and John 6:24-35

"Given For You"

Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

God gives daily bread, even without our prayer, to all people, though sinful, but we ask in this prayer that he would help us realize and to receive our daily bread with thanks.

This is the meaning from Luther's Small Catechism to the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer. "Give us this day our daily bread." In this explanation we learn that God gives daily bread which includes everything we need for daily life without praying for it to everyone both saint and sinner alike without asking for it. We are also praying that we would realize this unconditional gift and simply receive it with thanks.

In the world we live in, we are trained to be cautious at receiving anything free. We learn there must be a catch somewhere. There are no free lunches. Maybe that's why we, like the Israelites are better at complaining about things we don't have or if we don't think we are complainers, we try our best to offset what we are given by exchanging something we can offer for what we have received so we don't have to say those two words, "Thank you". It is hard not to apply the adage "you get what you pay for" to everything including our salvation. In the first lesson from Exodus today Moses was leading a congregation of complainers. They were complaining against Moses and Aaron even though they had just led them out of slavery into freedom. But now they were hungry. They were no longer thankful for their freedom. In fact, they would rather die as slaves than to live in freedom and be hungry.

Moses and Aaron were not the only two that heard the complaining of the Israelites. The Lord also heard their complaining, but the Lord heard their complaints as a prayer. Moses and Aaron probably would have gladly granted the Israelite's wish to become slaves again so their lives could return to some peace and quiet. However, this is not how the Lord responds to his chosen people when he hears a prayer, even when, and maybe especially when, it sounds like a complaint. They complained about their hunger and the Lord did respond with punishment but responded with food. And the last words of the people who were now belly-full of food was not "thank you", but "What is this?" Moses told them, "It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat."

Moses told them where the food came from. The Lord supplied it. Moses told them the price. It was given to them. And Moses told them what they were supposed to do with it. Take it and eat it. Moses didn't even suggest that it would be nice if they said, "thank you". Adding those words might have sounded like the gift had a string attached. They might have started to believe that their "Thank you's" were the key words that would open up the heavens again so that they would receive their next meal.

We, who are also God's chosen people, are like God's chosen people who complained to Moses and Aaron. We want more than we have. And we believe the things we have are ours because we paid for them. We didn't just receive what we have. We worked for them and paid for them, and they belong to us.

It is rare when we are simply given anything. Your job may allow you to take some vacation days and still receive a paycheck even when you don't produce any work at your job. But even then, you don't receive

this benefit before doing some work first. More often than not, we live in a world where you reap what you sow. If someone else pays for your meal, instead of saying "thank you" you say that you will return the favor next time you go out and eat. Even gifts that child receive at Christmas are held hostage by telling the children that their list of "nicest" better be longer than their list of "naughtiest" if they expect to open any packages under the Christmas tree. More often than not, you simply get what you deserve.

We also have learned at a young age that complaining often doesn't speed up the process of getting what we want. When children complain, they often are told that they won't get anything unless they change their attitudes. Adults may experience the same problem by complaining about what they don't have. We too feel that there might be greater consequences or retaliations if we speak up for what we want. Instead of getting more, we might have something else taken away.

*The crowd of people that were looking for Jesus were doing some grumbling too. First, they were complaining that Jesus seemed to disappear after he fed the crowd of people with the five loaves and the two fish. After these Jesus seekers rowed to the other side of the sea and found Jesus, they wanted to know **when** he arrived on the other side of the sea. They felt that Jesus should have asked for permission before leaving and he should have them asked if they wanted anything else before leaving them.*

*The complaints of this crowd that Jesus heard were a little different from those from the Israelites that were directed at Moses and Aaron. This crowds who had seen the signs Jesus had done wanted to know what **they could do** in order for Jesus to perform another amazing sign. They did not understand what the words "given for you" meant. Instead of hearing "given", they heard "offered" or "made available ". They were no different than how we respond to a gift today. They wanted to know "what must we do"? Jesus answered them by saying, "Believe in him whom he has sent." Jesus was attempting to teach them about faith by comparing himself to the manna that fed their ancestors in the wilderness. Jesus, like the bread, had come down from heaven and there was nothing to pay, nothing to do, except take and eat what was given to them. But without having faith in the one who sent the bread, they doubted they would receive the next meal without doing something to get more bread to fall from heaven.*

The story of the complainers in the wilderness and the Jesus seekers who crossed the sea have been recorded in scripture for you. Your heavenly Father has promised to also hear your complaints, your prayers, and He will deliver daily bread to you. He taught his disciples and you to pray in a way expecting to receive what he has promised to give. Give us this day our daily bread.

The greater news in these stories is about Jesus who is not our daily bread but is the True Bread that has come down from heaven for you. Jesus is the bread of life that has no expiration date and never runs out. Jesus, the True Bread, was sent down from heaven and given for you. The only exchange that takes place in receiving this gift is that Jesus takes your sins and gives his righteousness to you so that you will never be hungry or thirst for anything else. Jesus delivers this wonderful gift again today in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The Bread of Life, the True Bread from heaven is given for you. Amen