



Good Shepherd Lutheran Church & School

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A Stephen Ministry Congregation

www.goodshepherdwi.org

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

August 6, 2017

“Stuffed”

(Isaiah 55:1-3a)

Rev. David K. Groth

“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live” (Is. 55:1-3a).

**Every day, everywhere, by everyone...
sharing the grace of the Good Shepherd.**

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.**

God sounds like the town crier here, shouting out an important notice that everyone needs to hear. “Come” he says, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters. . . Hear me that your soul may live.”

Four times God says, “Come.” It must be important, right? It must be something we should not miss. And indeed, it is! This is an invitation to salvation’s banquet. God is almost begging us to come, because he refuses to shove us around like pawns on a chess board. That is, no one is forced to accept the invitation. However, those who disregard it must reckon with the possibility that they have heard it for the last time.

It makes me think of the parable of the wedding banquet. The King doesn’t have his servants drag anyone to the celebration. If they want, they are free to turn up their noses . . . even to the king.

In John 12, Jesus said, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going” (v. 35).

In the parable of the wise and foolish bridesmaids, there were five who were foolish and unprepared. They had procrastinated, so at the last minute they had to go out and buy oil for their lamps. This delayed them, and by the time they got to the banquet the door was already shut and locked and they were denied entrance (Mt. 25:1ff).

Luther wrote, “Let us remember our former misery, and the darkness in which we dwelt. Germany, I am sure, has never before heard so much of God’s Word as it is hearing today . . . If we let it just slip by without thanks and honor, I fear we shall suffer a still more dreadful darkness and plague. O my beloved Germans, buy while the market is at your door; gather in the harvest while there is sunshine and fair weather; make use of God’s grace and Word while it is there! For you should know that God’s Word and grace is like a passing shower of rain which does not return where it has once been. It has been with the Jews, but when it’s gone it’s gone, and now they have nothing. Paul brought it to the Greeks; but again when it’s gone it’s gone, and now they have the Muslim Turk, [which had, at the time, taken control of that part of the world]. Rome and the Latins also had it; but when it’s gone it’s gone, and now they have [those who have turned grace into works righteousness]. And you Germans need not think that you will have it forever, for ingratitude and contempt will not make it stay. Therefore, seize it and hold it fast, whoever can” (LW 45:352).

In the General Prayer of the Church from Lutheran Worship, there’s this line: “As we are

strangers and pilgrims on earth, help us by true faith and a godly life to prepare for the world to come, doing the work you have given us to do while it is day, before the night comes.” Can’t you feel that in our own country, the night is coming? We are, right now, in a season of grace. But there is also drawing near a day when we will no longer hear the invitation to “come to the waters”.

Well let’s have a closer look at our text. In the Old Testament, longing for God is often associated with longing for water. For example, from Psalm 42 “As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God” (v. 1-2).

We live in Watertown, where lots of water is never far away. But put yourself in a dusty, waterless, treeless, sun baked valley of Israel, and then hear these words: “Come to the waters” God invites. “Come, all you who thirst.”

Jesus extended the same invitation. To the woman at the well, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:13ff). And again, a few chapters later, Jesus says “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him” (Jn. 7:37).

Notice the radical inclusion. He uses the word anyone, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.” He also uses the word “whoever”, as in, “whoever believes in me, streams of living

water will flow from within him” and again, “whoever drinks the water I give will never thirst.” There’s no possible way that you are left out of God’s invitation. Come, *anyone* who thirsts. No one should think themselves outside of this invitation. Mark 2, “It’s not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

The early church father Chrysostom wrote in the 4th century, “Even if we stand at the very summit of virtue, it is [only] by mercy that we shall be saved.” We have to keep reminding ourselves of that: salvation is not about moving from vice to virtue, but from virtue to faith.

The Old Testament also associates hunger for food with hunger for God. We hear it in our text, “Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread?” In other words, “Why do you go after that which really doesn’t satisfy?”

Money, for instance, is probably the greatest idol in the land. Most Americans when asked if we have enough money would say, “I could use a little more.” It’d be nice to be able to make some home improvements. It’d be nice to be able to drive a newer model car. It’d be nice to be able to pay more of the tuition for the children or grandchildren. So when asked if you have enough money, most, if not all in this room would agree, “I could use a little more.”

Isn’t it interesting that even the most wealthy Americans also say they could use a little more. Clearly this means money does not satisfy like we think it should. It cannot quench our deepest thirst

or satisfy our deepest hunger. It doesn't fix what's wrong with us. So why believe the devil's lie? Why work so hard, God asks, for that which does not satisfy?

What alternative does he offer? Verse 2, "Listen. Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food." Money cannot satisfy your deepest hungers, but God can. Verse 3, "Incline your ear, and come to me; hear me, that your *soul* may live." It seems there are two hungers in us: hunger for food, and hunger for God. Ignore them, either one, and we die.

In our Gospel lesson Jesus feeds the five thousand, with just five little loaves of bread and two fish. They even took up twelve baskets full of left over pieces. The lesson of the miracle, of course, is very simple: Jesus satisfies your deepest hunger. Verse 20, "They all ate and were satisfied."

The Greek word used there for "satisfied" is an interesting one. *Xortaxomai*. It's usually used for the fattening of cattle. In Watertown, it makes me think of the noodling, the force feeding of goslings to expand their livers so that fine New York restaurants could serve what on the menus was often called "Watertown Stuffed Geese" or "Watertown *Foie Gras*." *Xortaxomai*. It makes me think of a Dachshund, a wiener dog I once knew. I think his name was Gilbert and he belonged to one of my shut-ins. Gilbert was so fat and his legs so short that he dragged his belly around on the carpet, and had a streak of hairless, calloused flesh going down the length of his belly, which he always wanted me to scratch.

Xortaxomai “They all ate and were satisfied.”

A less elegant but perhaps more accurate translation would be, “They all ate until they were stuffed.”

So the message of the Old and New Testaments converges in Jesus Christ, who satisfies your deepest hunger.

So, “*Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live.*”
Amen.

