



Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

“The Eyes of All”
Pslam 145: 15-16

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GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Collect of the Day

Merciful Father, You gave Your Son Jesus as the heavenly bread of life. Grant us faith to feast on Him in Your Word and Sacraments that we may be nourished unto life everlasting; through the same Jesus Christ, Our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

“The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing” (Psalm 145:15-16).

When I think of this verse, I think of our dog Benno. In the evening, we feed him no sooner than 5:00 pm, so by 4:55 you’ll find him there in the laundry room, looking at his dish and then looking at me and looking at his dish again. Sometimes I think he’s on the verge of speech, but for now his eyes still do the talking.

The eyes of all look to you, O Lord, and you give them their food at the proper time. I think of the squirrel last week at Memorial Union in Madison. His hunger for food was stronger than his fear of humans. And so he wove in between the tables and chairs and feet, cautiously, because not everyone was glad to see him and he knew it. He looked to me, with the same look that Benno gives. I gave him a big piece of popcorn which he grabbed with both paws. He sat on his haunches and nibbled furiously, rotating it in those hand-like paws of his.

The eyes of all look to you, O Lord. I think of the carp (or Koi) at the St. Louis Botanical Gardens. At a bridge you can buy pellets and sprinkle them into the water. I’ve learned that if you drop the pellets one at a time in small space, the carp will converge on that space,

food.” (Gen. 1:29ff). He withheld nothing. What generosity! And with that generosity comes responsibility, for we learn a couple of chapters later that we are indeed our brother’s keeper.

“You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing.” That hand of his is always full; he never runs out. As much as he gives, there is always more to give, more than we can take in. He does it with food. He did it on the cross as well. He opened his hands and satisfied our deepest needs. We may not have the appetite for forgiveness like we do for brats and burgers. Yet the Bible teaches we need that forgiveness as much as we need anything. Without it, there is no salvation. Without forgiveness, there is no admittance into heaven. Without it, there is no eternal life. And the Good News is God has opened his hands on the cross, and satisfies us with his forgiveness. He gives us again his body and blood.

Did you notice in the Old Testament lesson, God heard their grumbling. And rather than turning away from his people or condemning them, he responds and sends them meat to eat and bread to the full . . . not because it was such a pleasure giving them things. No but because he heard their grumbling against him. He could have stirred up his anger, but he was stirred by his compassion. He hears our grumbling and he notices our ingratitude, and still he opens his hands and satisfies us with his forgiveness. He’s not in the business of starving anyone in any way. He loves to satisfy his creatures with good things, and of these none is better, and none more essential than his forgiveness, for our bodies, our souls, and our salvation.

“The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing.” Amen.

like Job who said, “The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord!” (Job 1:21).

“The eyes of all look to you, O Lord, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.” Why then do people starve, you ask? If he gives people their food at the proper time, why then is there still hunger and malnourishment? Often it’s not so much a genuine question as it is an indictment against God . . . and against his Word.

Show me where there are starving people and it’s usually the same place where there’s military strife and refugees on the run and maybe even convoys full of food idling at the border, unable to enter because it’s too dangerous. Show me where there are starving people and it’s usually the same place where there’s deep corruption within the government and profound neglect of duties. Show me where there are starving people and I’ll show you a nation of wealthy Christians unmindful of a hungry world, a nation of rich men and women who can be so stingy with our alms for the hungry. Show me where there are starving people and just try to blame that on God, and I’ll take you down to the Potawatomi casino and I’ll show you what bad stewardship looks like, and then I’ll show you how the average household in Watertown spends far more on soda than it does on any sort of humanitarian relief. Show me where there are starving people, and I’ll show you a world broken by man’s sin, where there are floods and drought and hail, where there is blight, and clouds of pests, and it all finds its origin not in the activity of God nor the inactivity of God, but in man’s ancient and on-going disobedience.

Instead of indicting God, we do well to praise and thank him for his generosity and grace. In the first chapter Genesis God said, “Behold, I have give you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for

and go nuts and jostle and push and soon you’ll be looking at maybe fifty enormous carp mouths with fat lips opening and closing, and all those eyes on you and on their manna coming down from heaven.

“You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.” I think of the homeless woman sitting on a bench in a park in Manhattan. She had pigeons perched on her shoulders, her knees, even her head. Their comfort with her implied a daily ritual, a daily feeding. Some New Yorkers think of pigeons as rats with wings. But I suspect that homeless woman worried more about dangerous people than dangerous pigeons. The birds looked to her and she opened her hand and satisfied their desires.

Ultimately, all food comes from God. There is no food for man or beast or bird unless it comes from his hand. Often God uses us and other creatures to distribute it. In the Large Catechism, Luther wrote, “Creatures are only the hands, channels, and means by which God gives all things. So He gives to the mother breasts and milk to offer to her child, and He gives corn and all kinds of produce from the earth for nourishment. None of these blessings could be produced by any creature of itself” (LC 1, 26).

The Father cares for and sustains each of His creatures, from the amoeba to the angels. He gives them their food at the proper time. Can you do that? Or as the Lord asked of Job, “Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, when they crouch in their dens or lie in wait in their thicket? Who provides for the raven its prey” he asks, “when its young ones cry to God for help?” (38:39).

Every fork full in your life and mine comes from the Lord. Every single thistle seed for the gold finches comes from the Lord. Psalm 104 says that too: “The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God” (v. 21). Psalm 147, “He covers the heavens with

clouds; he prepares rain for the earth; he makes grass grow on the hills. He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry” (vv. 8-9).

The eyes of all look to you, O Lord, and you give them their food at the proper time. We don’t always believe it. I’m thinking now of God’s ancient people out there in the desert, grumbling against Moses and Aaron, but also against the Lord. “You’re trying to starve us out here” they say. They exaggerate how bad their present hardship is, but they also exaggerate how well they ate in the good old days. Their memory plays tricks on them and they yearn to be slaves of Pharaoh again so they can sit all day long by pots full of meat and eat bread until they are stuffed. They remember nothing of the bricks without straw or the work without reward, the whip without mercy or the life without hope or rest.

God’s people grumbled in the desert and we grumble still today . . . about the food in the school cafeteria, or at the nursing home, as if we were suffering genuine hardship, as if it were a dollop of gruel served straight out of Charles Dickens’ *Oliver Twist*. I think of God’s people who complain about the slow service at the restaurant, and don’t even look the waitress in the eyes, or smile, or say thank you to God’s servant. I think of God’s people today who, like Benno, expect their dinner at a certain time, and should it be a little late, there will be some whining and maybe even a little barking. I’m thinking of God’s people today, whose grumbling sounds no different on His ears than it did thousands of years ago. Where’s the thanksgiving? Where’s the trust? Where’s the praise? “Were not all ten cleansed?” Jesus asked the one grateful leper. “Where are the other nine?” The birds sang God’s praises this morning at breakfast. Did you?

Ron Wille told me when pigs see you coming to give them food, they will rush you from all sides and will jostle and shove and push and knock you off your feet if

you’re not careful. “They have no manners,” Ron said. Somewhere, Martin Luther said when we fail to give thanks to God before a meal we are than pigs at the trough. That tweaks my ears too because sometimes before filling my plate at the kitchen island, I mouth those prayers of thanks. I say the words, but my heart is somewhere else. And then when we sit down to eat, I try to lead the family to pray again. It’s embarrassing. Maybe you’ve experienced something similar.

From the highest heavens God hears our murmuring, but somehow our thanks and praise never makes it all the way there. For instance, there’s nothing like a drought that turns our eyes to the heavens. And for all the grumbling about how hot and dry it has been, do you think that was matched with thanks and praise to God for the thunder showers we did have? Or was our reaction more like, “Well it’s about time” or “Too little and too late.”

You give them their food in due season.” God’s season may not be our season, even as Benno will quietly sit and stare at his dish before it’s time. But at the proper time, God opens his hands and satisfies. We trust there is wisdom there. It’s not just random. It’s not that he’s neglecting us or forgetting about us. There’s a plan and a purpose.

Earlier in July we went cherry picking at an orchard near Fort Atkinson. Even though we went on the first day, the trees were thin of cherries. You recall we had an early spring that coaxed the fruit trees into flowering. And then we had a hard freeze, followed by heat and drought. The result was a very thin cherry harvest. As we were washing and pitting the cherries, I told the owner that I hoped next year would be better for him. He said, “You know, this was a disastrous year for cherries, but I’ve never had two disastrous years in a row.” He smiled a little and said, “But I *have* had two bumper crops in a row.” I like his attitude. He sounded a little