

Emmanuel Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
Pentecost 9  
July 25, 2021  
Sermon by Pastor Christopher Pflughoeft  
**Jesus gives nourishment**

—Mark 6:30-34

*<sup>30</sup>The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup>Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." <sup>32</sup>So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. <sup>33</sup>But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. <sup>34</sup>When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.*

Professional athletes must do everything possible to keep their bodies in peak condition. They are paid tens, even hundreds of millions of dollars to do so. For this reason, it is more surprising to hear when an athlete likes to eat some junk food than it is to hear about some of their intense workout routines.

When you think of professional athletes who take amazing care of their bodies, who comes to mind? Tom Brady? Usain Bolt? LeBron James? For me, I think of the newly signed Arizona Cardinals Defensive End, J.J. Watt. (I have been a fan of Watt's since his days playing for the Wisconsin Badgers. I am excited to watch him play in Cardinal Red!) The extent that Watt goes through to keep his body in the top physical condition is nearly unbelievable. According to Mark Beech, of Sports Illustrated, in an article entitled, "The Power of Sleep: J.J. Watt knows how to turn it on and turn it off," Watt had a queen-sized bed in the locker-room of his former team. This was so that in between practice and eating seven meals per day, Watt could take naps. Clearly, J.J. Watt understands the importance of sleep and sustenance for the nourishment of his body.

Rest and food are critical for physical health. In a spiritual sense, it is critical to know the source of everlasting rest and true sustenance. Today in the Gospel lesson, we see that **Jesus gives nourishment**. He gives you rest. He feeds you with his word.

The lesson for today comes immediately after last week's Gospel lesson. In last week's Gospel lesson, Jesus sent out his disciples with authority to preach, teach, anoint, and drive out demons. According to a biblical commentator, Voelz, there is intercalation between that reading and the one for today. This is an interruption essentially that communicates a connection between the two accounts. Before Mark finishes the account of the disciples going out and returning to Jesus with their reports, Mark tells us about the martyrdom of John the Baptist. This intercalation communicates that difficulty, even physical death, may result from one's faithful service to the Lord.

This truth is important to always remember as a Christian in this world. Without forgetting this, the reading for today has a bit of a different focus. Here, we don't see the earthly difficulties that may result from being a follower of Jesus. Instead, we see the spiritual blessings that Jesus gives. We see that **Jesus gives nourishment**.

The first way that we see **Jesus gives nourishment** is that He gives you rest. The lesson for today begins with the twelve disciples returning to Jesus after going out to teach. Here, they are called apostles. By the way, this is one of two occasions in which they are called apostles in the Gospel according to St. Mark. The name apostle shows the special work they were given. Jesus sent them. Imagine what it must have been like to hear the apostles report to Jesus what they had seen and done: their joys, their frustrations, their successes, their difficulties. After their hard work was accomplished, Jesus wanted to take them away from the large crowd of people. So, Jesus got them into a boat. Then, Jesus took them off to a solitary place. Jesus did this to give them rest. It is important to note that Jesus gave his disciples this physical rest. They worked hard. Now, Jesus was giving them rest. Jesus cared about his disciples. He made sure they would rest. But, more importantly, Jesus gave his disciples a greater rest. In Jesus, they had eternal rest.

In the Old Testament, the Lord established for his people a Sabbath rest. This Sabbath rest was based upon the rest He took on the seventh day of creation. This Sabbath rest took the form of a day, a season, a year, and the Year of Jubilee. This rest was a command from God. You are familiar with it from the Ten Commandments; we call it the third commandment. It was also a blessing from God. It was a way to protect people in a difficult life. They could overwork themselves or overwork the soil. Rest was needed. Ultimately though, it was a shadow. It was a resemblance to the ultimate, eternal rest that Jesus gives. The author of Hebrews wrote about the fulfillment of the Sabbath rest, "*For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from*

*his own work, just as God did from his.*" (Hebrews 4:9-11) The true rest of which he speaks is the rest in heaven. This is rest which only comes in Christ Jesus. Jesus gives rest.

Life is hard: emotional stress, physical stress, anxiety, and fears. Where do you go to find rest from your toils and troubles? Where do you go to find rest? Award-winning internet blogger Kelsey of *So Much Life* gives her answers. In her article, *10 Little Ways I Find Rest*, she outlines the ten things she does daily to find rest. In this list, Kelsey reveals that she listens to podcasts, intentionalizes saying 'no,' disconnects from her phone, and talks to loved ones. Now, Kelsey's recommendations are pretty good when it comes to finding temporary rest. This is good advice for nourishing one's mental health. There is a huge problem with Kelsey's list, however. None of these things provide lasting rest. They may help, but they are not enough.

Do you ever read such tips? I am not going to tell you to stop. Intentionalized breathing does wonders for your day. The problem is that these tips are all upon you. How do you find rest? You have to do something? Really? If you rely upon yourself to find physical rest, things may get better. If you rely upon yourself for spiritual rest, you will not find rest at all. No, we cannot reach lasting rest on our own. Depending upon yourself will lead only to the eternal toil of hell.

True rest, eternal rest, heavenly rest comes only from Jesus. Jesus gives you rest through what he has done, through his perfect life and innocent death. When you consider the perfect life that Jesus lived in your place, do you think about how Jesus rested perfectly for you? When you see Jesus sleeping in the stern of the boat or going off on his own to pray, that is Jesus living perfectly in your place. That is the righteousness of Christ that is given to you. On the cross, Jesus died for your sins. Jesus took the punishment your self-reliance deserved. Jesus took your sins and gave you his righteousness. In Jesus' work, you have rest. You will enter the eternal rest of heaven.

Rest and sustenance are essential aspects of nourishment. In the Gospel lesson, we see **Jesus gives you nourishment**. Already, we saw that Jesus gives you rest. In this lesson, we also know that he feeds you with his word.

This reading is interesting because it ends right before Jesus feeds 5,000 men with just a few pieces of bread and fish. Looking at these verses in this way causes us to focus on a major way that Jesus provided nourishment to the people. There is a bit of foreshadowing of the upcoming miracle in these verses. Mark indicates that people had not eaten yet. Basically, Mark tells us that they were hungry. Then, Jesus looked upon these hungry people, and he gave them the sustenance they truly needed. Before feeding them the bread and fish, Jesus taught these people. He shared with them his holy word. He gave them bread that truly fills, the word about the Bread of Life. Jesus fed them with his word.

To live, a person must receive sustenance. If you do not eat, if you do not take in any nutrients, you will die. To live eternally, a person needs the Word of God. She needs the Means of Grace. She needs the gospel of Christ Jesus. This is the power of God through which the Holy Spirit creates faith in her heart. This is the power of God through which the Holy Spirit gives life. Before feeding these hungry people bread and fish, Jesus fed them with his life-giving word.

Where do you go to be sustained? Well, in a physical sense, I am going to guess it is Fry's, Sprout's, or Albertson's. And if you are like me, you like to indulge in \$1.50 nuggets at Burger King. We can all agree that it is important to go to the proper sources to be nourished. Fast food should not be my primary source of sustenance. That would be foolish. In a greater sense, it would be foolish to go to improper sources to be spiritually sustained. Whether intentional or unintentional, we all have been guilty of indulging in spiritual junk food. Maybe it is as obvious as drinking the poison of antichristian doctrine. Maybe it is as seemingly benign as eating the processed food of self-help. Know that the content that you consume affects you. Indulging in sinful materials can certainly kill you.

As the Apostle Peter proclaimed, "*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*" (John 6:68) Nourishment comes from Jesus. Jesus feeds you his life-giving word. You receive this nourishment from Jesus, the forgiveness of sins, through the means of grace, which are the word and sacrament. You were given life at your baptism when the word of God was spoken, and water was poured on your head. Your faith is sustained when the word is proclaimed here at church. Your faith is sustained when the words of institution are spoken, the bread and wine are distributed, the elements are consumed, and you receive the body and blood of Christ Jesus. **Jesus gives you nourishment**. He feeds you with his word. You have life in Jesus Christ.

With the knowledge that Jesus is the source of true rest and sustenance, go where you are nourished. Read devotionals and receive rest for your soul. Go to church and hear the word of life proclaimed. Bring your children to the font. There, they are given life. Come to the altar and receive the true body and blood of Jesus Christ. Your eternal rest, your true sustenance, your life comes from Jesus. **Jesus gives you nourishment**.

Professional athletes, such as J.J. Watt, know the importance of nourishing their bodies. They strive for adequate amounts of sleep. They care about the foods that they eat. It is wise for us to also care about nourishing our physical bodies. But, more importantly, we need to know the source of true, spiritual nourishment. **Jesus gives you nourishment.** He gives you rest. He feeds you with his word. Because of Jesus' life and death, you will rest forever in the presence of your Heavenly Father. Amen.