**The Source of All Bread**

Based on [John 6:1-15](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn6.1-15)

Preached on March 22, 2020

The Fourth Sunday in Lent ~ Laetare

Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

Lately as a society, we have been anxious about the future. Large sections of aisles in the grocery stores are and have been empty for over a week. And there is a good side to that. The present shortage creates an awareness that food and other things don’t just magically appear on the shelves. There is no endless supply of consumer goods...and the limit to what you can buy is now not only what you can afford. We have learned to trust in money, because we have had a successful society for generations. Money, or lack of it, is the only social barrier that people understand keeps them from getting what they want. Now, with this pandemic, we must confront the fact that, even if we have the money, we can’t buy more toilet paper, or bleach, because it’s just not available.

Let us compare our present circumstance with our reading today. Crowds were following Jesus because he was performing signs. They were following him so intently that apparently, they didn’t consider the fact that they were unable to buy food from their remote location. Then, to test his disciples, Jesus asks them, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” One disciple says it’s too expensive to buy food for everybody. The other says we have a little food, but it’s not enough to feed everybody.

In a time of social unrest like today, our faith in the social order is shaken. We are following the “teachings and signs” of the government to quarantine, and isolate, and shut down business in order to avoid spreading a possible plague. We are over a week into these measures, and people are starting to ask what the longview is. If we shut down half the economy for months, how are we going to feed everybody? If we allow unemployment to increase, where are there going to be enough jobs to employ everybody?

Following recommendations to shut down business and travel, and to grant relief packages to those people who are without work or income is a lot like following someone out into the wilderness without any food. What makes all the difference is who you’re following.

Without a God to trust, the world has to trust the government. The government says that the present virus pandemic is such a threat that it is worth taking measures that will almost surely lead to a severe economic recession. At the very least, it is incurring more national and provincial debt. If they are right, then stopping the plague is worth it. If they are wrong, then they’ve taken us out of the frying pan and into the fire. I don’t know which they’ve done; none of us can know for sure, not even those in the government making the calls. But that’s nothing new. That’s always been the case...it’s just now, our gracious God has blessed us with a sign to remind us of the unreliability of the world.

You see, in order to know for certain anything at all you have to know everything. This is why we don’t know anything for certain. The government or institutions made up of men cannot know anything for certain. Their promises are always limited by circumstances beyond their control. And so, there is never any real assurance that things will work out in the end, that “it’s going to be okay”, that a crown awaits you at the end of the race, or that the present struggles do end in victory. The only person that can know that is a person who knows all things, controls all things, orders all things according to His purposes.

Only God knows anything for certain. And we know God by faith, which is a form of certainty derived from God. And it is precisely when it looks like the world is going to fall apart that we can turn to the One who knows everything and know what he says. He says that plagues and famines are signs of our redemption, reminders that the end is coming and drawing near. The end is not a tragedy, the end is the end of our sin, the end of our suffering, the end of uncertainty and doubt, the end of all regrets about the past and anxieties about the future.

We are directed by the government to follow their recommendations and protocols. We should do so insofar as we are not directed to sin and evil. Because we are not really following the government for our future. We who have the hope of salvation--won for us by the cross, guaranteed by the Spirit--we in all things follow Jesus Christ alone. Because he alone knows all things, controls all things, orders all things according to his purposes. He is the image of the invisible God, and he upholds the universe by the Word of his power.

Before Jesus fed the crowds he tested his disciples, asking them where they could buy bread so the crowds would eat. Their minds still weren’t trained enough to rightly discern the situation. They were thinking they needed a grocery store to buy bread, or else see what they could find in their inventory. Little did they realize they were in the midst of the source of all bread.

I’ve seen video shorts of Late Night talk show hosts wandering around New York or LA with a microphone in order to find out how clueless Americans are. Some don’t know who the vice president is, or how many world wars there were. Pretty sad, yeah. There are some people who don’t know where milk comes from, or think that chocolate milk comes from brown cows. Actually it’s sad when people aren’t aware that their groceries come from packaging plants who get their raw grains and meat and other food from farmers, who then harvest it from the earth. When people think milk comes from the store and forget about the cow, we think they are foolish.

If a late night talk show host came up to you and asked you where your bread comes from, I know you wouldn’t be silly enough to say the store. But would you give the right answer? Your bread comes from God, and when God is with you, you will always have bread when you need it. And if you don’t have it, that’s okay too, because he knows what he’s doing when he allows you to be in want of earthly goods. It is why David says, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” “I shall not want”.

As we face earthly uncertainties, we know for certain that this world is coming to an end, and the government won’t be able to stop it. The government might even trigger it. But whatever happens we rejoice in the confidence of knowing that we have followed Jesus into the wilderness of this world. And even should we come to a point where we see no means of supporting ourselves, we know we are in the midst and in the graces of the source of all good things. Jesus fed the multitude with bread left over, without them even asking for it. How much more should we be certain that our Heavenly Father, when we ask him, will give us the Holy Spirit to sustain us in all things?