

Gospel Reflections:
JOHN 6

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JOHN 6:1-15

- 1: After these things JESUS went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias.
- 2: And a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His miracles which He did on them that were diseased.
- 3: And JESUS went up into a mountain, and there He sat with his disciples.
- 4: And The Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.
- 5: When JESUS then lifted up His eyes, and saw a great company come unto Him, He saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?
- 6: And this He said to prove him: for He Himself knew what He would do.
- 7: Philip answered Him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.
- 8: One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto Him,
- 9: There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?
- 10: And JESUS said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.
- 11: And JESUS took the loaves; and when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.
- 12: When they were filled, He said unto His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.
- 13: Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.
- 14: Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that JESUS did, said, This is of a truth That Prophet that should come into the world.
- 15: When JESUS therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain Himself alone.

Here we have repeated for us Saint John's account of the miracle of the fish and loaves recorded for us in The synoptic Gospels. A few mere fish and a few pieces of bread to feed a multitude of GOD's people. CHRIST, as He tested His disciples, pushes them – and us – to see that indeed, “man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of GOD.” Here is GOD Incarnate, and He offers The Bread of Life come down from Heaven, and His Words are those of life which only The Almighty can give.

Now it is interesting to see that, as a result of this miracle, many of the Jews – hungry for The LORD to send The Prophet-Priest-King that would, so they thought, free Israel from Gentile oppression – identified JESUS as “That Prophet.” They were expecting GOD to deliver them from worldly political oppression and to set up again a mighty earthly nation Kingdom of Israel. But they did not understand that GOD was planning something far more glorious and effective, the setting up of Heaven on earth in The form of The Church, the spreading of what national Israel was to have been to all mankind – but failed to do – the knowledge and love of The Creator to all men!

But JESUS, in truth always in control of events for The Father's will – even when men mistakenly think that events are controlling Him – goes up into a high mountain by Himself to thwart the plans of men. It is GOD's will that the faithful should always be hungry to fulfill in all humility, rather than their own will in all haughtiness! The Jews, as the remnant of the holy nation Israel, had been chastened by GOD for turning from Him. But still they had not learned, that it is what The LORD commands, and not what we dictate, that is to be!

So the writer of HEBREWS says in HEBREWS 12:13-15 that we are to make straight our paths before The Almighty in His righteousness, as He commands, and not according to our own feeble plans of self exaltation! Only in this way may we receive, by GOD's Grace, deliverance and healing according to His will for us: "And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of The Grace of GOD; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." For if we do not, we shall be chastised by the hand of The LORD, and in our bitterness, the devil is ever ready to receive us into defilement and despair!

JOHN 6:16-27

16: And when even was now come, His disciples went down unto the sea,
17: And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and JESUS was not come to them.
18: And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.
19: So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see JESUS walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid.
20: But He saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid.
21: Then they willingly received Him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.
22: The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto His disciples were entered, and that JESUS went not with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples were gone away alone;
23: (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that The Lord had given thanks:)
24: When the people therefore saw that JESUS was not there, neither His disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for JESUS.
25: And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest Thou hither?
26: JESUS answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.
27: Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which The Son of Man shall give unto you: for Him hath GOD The Father sealed.

First we have CHRIST walking upon the water to the disciples in the boat, even in the midst of a storm. And when they saw Him so walking, they were afraid. Indeed, when we come to the realization of Who JESUS CHRIST is, it should fill us with fear and awe, for He is GOD Himself, The Son of GOD, come to us! But as JESUS entered the midst of the disciples in the boat of life, and so when He enters into our lives upon the storms of life, there comes quiet and peace to us because of His Presence, The Presence of GOD Himself come to us in love to save us from despair and destruction!

Second we have the people hungering for JESUS, to be with Him, to dwell in His Presence. For though they do not fully understand Who He is – as do we – yet there is here the realization that in CHRIST's Presence there is peace and deliverance! But is it for hope of miracles? For the hope of prayers answered by GOD according to our dictates? Or for deliverance, according to our self-centered desires, from the oppressions of life?

Yes, all these are good reasons to come to The Lord in faith and seek to be in His Presence. But JESUS says, "Wait! There is an even more important reason to come to Me: dwell with Me and partake of Me in humble faith, and I will give you everlasting life! By my outstretched arm, I shall deliver you from the wages of sin – sorrow, death and damnation – and you shall dwell with me both now and forever!"

JOHN 6:28-40

28: Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of GOD?

29: JESUS answered and said unto them, This is the work of GOD, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent.

30: They said therefore unto Him, What sign shewest Thou then, that we may see, and believe Thee? what dost Thou work?

31: Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

32: Then JESUS said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but My Father giveth you The True Bread from Heaven.

33: For The Bread of GOD is We which cometh down from Heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

34: Then said they unto Him, Lord, evermore give us This Bread.

35: And JESUS said unto them, I am The Bread of Life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.

36: But I said unto you, That ye also have seen Me, and believe not.

37: All that The Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.

38: For I came down from Heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.

39: And this is The Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

40: And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth The Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

What is the work of GOD set before us to eat daily? It is not merely to labour for the needs of physical life. Nor is it to run after the things of the world to fill our minds

with diversions of emptiness. The work that GOD calls all men to is to confess JESUS CHRIST as Lord and Saviour; to repent of their sins at The blessed Cross; to turn from wickedness; to be purged of sin-guilt by The Blood of The Lamb of GOD; to eat of The Bread of Life, that we not perish, but come to dwell with The Almighty both now and forever with joy and peace!

And what a Banquet of Love He prepares for us, as in PSALM 23:1-6, “The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in The House of The LORD for ever!”

GOD provided the ancient Israelites on their trek out of physical bondage for their earthly lives with earthly bread, which He caused to fall from the sky miraculously. But now GOD provides all of us, Jew and Gentile, with the call to come to His table and eat of The Eternal Bread of Life – JESUS CHRIST – Who alone delivers us from out of spiritual bondage for our lives, both in this world and in the next! O, how vain and foolish we are, when we decline The Invitation of Salvation at The Lord’s Table, and turn back into the deserts of destruction and death – walking away with empty bellies and empty souls – to perish in the wilderness of sin and darkness! How we must grieve The Heart of JESUS our Lord when we do. But how we must gladden His Sacred Heart when we sit down with Him at His Table and receive The Gift of The Bread of Life!

JOHN 6:41-58

41: The Jews then murmured at Him, because He said, I am The Bread which came down from Heaven.

42: And they said, Is not this JESUS, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that He saith, I came down from Heaven?

43: JESUS therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.

44: No man can come to Me, except The Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise Him up at the last day.

45: It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of GOD. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of The Father, cometh unto Me.

46: Not that any man hath seen The Father, save He which is of GOD, He hath seen The Father.

47: Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life.

48: I am That Bread of Life.

49: Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

50: This is The Bread which cometh down from Heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

51: I am The Living Bread which came down from Heaven: if any man eat of This Bread, he shall live for ever: and The Bread that I will give is My Flesh, which I will give for the

life of the world.

52: The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can This Man give us His Flesh to eat?

53: Then JESUS said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat The Flesh of The Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you.

54: Whoso eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

55: For My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed.

56: He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him.

57: As The Living Father hath sent Me, and I live by The Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me.

58: This is That Bread which came down from Heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of This Bread shall live for ever.

Moses writes in many places in The Torah, as in DEUTERONOMY 12:23-24, that the blood of animals shall not be consumed, but poured out as water on the ground, for the life is in the blood: "Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh. Thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water." This was a detestable abomination before The LORD, to consume blood, forbidden by GOD's Word.

It was also detestable to drink the blood of men and to consume the flesh of men, one of many horrific affronts to The Almighty practiced by the heathen Caananites. Solomon writes in WISDOM 12:3-6, "For it was Thy will to destroy by the hands of our fathers both those old inhabitants of Thy Holy Land, Whom Thou hatedst for doing most odious works of witchcrafts, and wicked sacrifices; And also those merciless murderers of children, and devourers of man's flesh, and the feasts of blood, With their priests out of the midst of their idolatrous crew, and the parents, that killed with their own hands souls destitute of help."

We see here The Son of GOD declaring to the Jews, and to all men, that they must eat His Flesh and drink His Blood in order to receive eternal life from The Almighty. Now if JESUS had meant this only metaphorically and symbolically, why would He not have said, "Wait, folks – I only mean that you must follow Me in righteousness to keep The Law of Moses to receive eternal life. And I am here from Above to show you how to do this right?" But instead, JESUS insists that, in some way, men must literally receive His Body and Blood and consume Him, so that we receive eternal life. JESUS CHRIST is GOD Incarnate, The Author of The Law Which He gave through Moses. How do we reconcile this seeming contradiction?

When we think of Holy Communion, we usually think of MATTHEW 26:26-28; MARK 14:22-24; LUKE 22:19-20. Or as Saint Paul records it for us in I CORINTHIANS 11:23-25, "For I have received of The Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That The Lord JESUS the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: This is My Body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also He took

the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is The New Testament in My Blood: This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.”

By instituting at The Last Supper The Holy Communion, CHRIST takes The Jewish Passover meal and, substituting Himself as The Eternal Lamb of GOD for the mere spotless earthly lamb, makes His Own Body and Blood the atonement for the sins of – not merely Israel – but all mankind. He institutes “The Holy Eucharist.” We see the shadows if This Great Work of salvation soon to come in The Gospel narrative here in JOHN 6. The early Church Fathers write much of CHRIST”s real Presence in The consecrated elements of The Eucharist, though not of the mechanism by which this occurs.

The Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and traditional high Lutheran Churches hold that the consecrated bread and wine, though keeping the outward accidents of these earthly materials, inwardly in their substance are transformed into The real Body and Blood of CHRIST in The Holy Eucharist. The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches hold to what came to be labeled “transubstantiation,” while Luther offered another mechanism, all of which confessing that JESUS CHRIST is fully Present – His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity – in The consecrated elements of The Lord’s Supper.

If there is any other way to resolve the seeming contradiction in JOHN 6, keeping in mind that Holy Scripture contains no real contradictions because it is GOD’s unerring Word, then – as far as I can see – this view is unavoidable. When the Priest of GOD consecrates the elements of bread and wine at The Communion Table of The Lord, why should we not accept This Great Mystery in all its wondrous glory? Yes, The Holy Eucharist is, like The Presence of JEHOVAH on Mount Sinai, surrounded by a Cloud of Mystery in The Presence of The King of the universe.

And no, we can not fully come to understand such a Great Gift of GOD in this life, and probably not fully in Heaven as well. But does this mean that we should not obey The Command of CHRIST we find here in JOHN 6, that to receive eternal life in Him, we must eat of His Flesh and drink of His Blood in The Holy Communion? GOD forbid, that we should so starve ourselves of His Divine Love, and perish!

JOHN 6:59-71

59: These things said He in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum.

60: Many therefore of His disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?

61: When JESUS knew in Himself that His disciples murmured at it, He said unto them, Doth this offend you?

62: What and if ye shall see The Son of Man ascend up where He was before?

63: It is The Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: The Words that I speak unto you, They are Spirit, and they are life.

64: But there are some of you that believe not. For JESUS knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him.

65: And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto Him of My Father.

66: From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.

67: Then said JESUS unto The Twelve, Will ye also go away?

68: Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast The Words of eternal life.

69: And we believe and are sure that Thou art That CHRIST, The Son of The Living GOD.

70: JESUS answered them, Have not I chosen you Twelve, and one of you is a devil?

71: He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray Him, being one of The Twelve.

“To whom should we go, Lord JESUS CHRIST? For You alone have The Words of eternal life!” We are all tempted at times to walk away from CHRIST, from His Holy Word, from His faithful Church, because what He commands of us is often hard. But when we do, cutting ourselves off from The Divine Love, what else can be our lot, but to suffer? And if we wander to far, we may even perish with the ungodly! But by GOD’s Grace, if we truly seek His face, His arm is never so short that it can not and will not deliver us back again to His Loving Presence!

O LORD, let us never wander from Your Table, but keep us always in Your Loving Presence at The Cross of CHRIST! As Saint Peter writes in I PETER 1:19-21, let us ever be fed of “...The precious Blood of CHRIST, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by Him do believe in GOD, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in GOD.” AMEN.