

Sermon: 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – Thanksgiving Sunday

Text: Deuteronomy 8:1-11 (v. 3b): “Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”

Theme: Not only bread...

Goal: To create the right balance between the physical and the spiritual needs.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: Is the daily bread not something important in our life that Moses warned against the concern about it? Of course, it is important and we need the daily bread. It is so important that Jesus taught us to pray for it in the Lord’s Prayer: “Give us this day our daily bread.” And notice a detail: Jesus didn’t teach to pray for the bread for tomorrow or for the next week. “Give us *this* day...”

What is the correct balance between our physical concerns and our spiritual concerns? Usually we are overwhelmed and stressed to get the daily bread, working hard and always trying to have a better job or a better income. We need it for ourselves and for our family. Are our efforts and concerns about our spiritual needs on the same level? Are we able to make a good balance between these two needs? Honestly, I think most of us has as priority to get the daily bread; and the spiritual part of our life has to wait for when we have time...

The Israelites had wandered through the wilderness for 40 years. When they were about to enter the Promised Land, Moses was recalling the many blessings they had received and how God gave them the Manna, the bread from heaven. They had experienced God’s care when there was nothing else in front of them but the desert. Now, that they would enter the Promised Land, they should

not forget God; but they had to be aware that “Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord”.

Jesus quoted this passage when He was hungry and was tempted by the devil (Matthew 4). Jesus had fasted for 40 days and was really hungry. Even so, He didn't fall into temptation, following Satan's suggestion, but He trusted in God's word and promise. Jesus did this for us, so that we shall not fall into desperation when it seems difficult to get the daily bread due to unemployment, low salary, extra medical expenses or other reasons. The Apostle Paul, writing about this issue, argues: “If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8: 31).

Our biggest spiritual need was catered for by Jesus, when He reconciled us with God shedding His blood on the cross. This reconciliation is assured and renewed every time we receive the forgiveness of our sins and partake in the Holy Communion. The Word of God is offered abundantly to every one of us in our homes and in the church to feed our spiritual needs. We cannot miss it or despise it because we are too busy running after our daily bread.

Moses gives several directions for what it means that “Man doesn't not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord”, and how to live on “every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord”.

I – To accept God's discipline

“Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you.” God had to discipline His people in the wilderness several times. When they began to go astray, God had to call them back, sometimes using even harsh disciplines, like

plagues, wars and other kinds of punishment. If you have any experience with children, you know that they need limits. God sometimes puts some limits to our ambitions and plans. It is hard for us to understand it when it happens. But it shows that God is calling us closer to Him, to trust in Him only; and many times he shows us a better way than ours.

II – “Observe the commands of the Lord your God.” The Ten Commandments are not some ancient rules from the past. They are very up to date. Don’t break God’s Command intentionally. As redeemed children of God on our way to the Promised Land, let His light shine through us, so that others see the good deeds we perform and praise the Father in heaven. If we live a life contrary to God’s commands, we are not sanctifying God’s name among our family and friends.

Moses said what we shall do: “Walking in his ways and revering him.” Jesus is the way and as God’s children we don’t have other options but follow our Elder Brother. If we don’t walk in His way, we are going back to darkness and we become lost. God doesn’t want to lose any of us, but He encourages us to follow His Son.

“Revering” God means to worship and to serve Him in our Service. Our offerings are part of our worship, and we bring them to the altar. Are our offerings only alms as we give some coins to a beggar? Or are they a thanksgiving offering, a sacrifice, part of our monthly budget? The Apostle Paul wrote: “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctant or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7). And the Bible orientation is always the same: Who has much, gives much; who has less, gives less. As in the Old Testament 10% was the average of offerings, see if your monthly offerings are close to that

goal. It is not a law, but a good orientation. If our offerings are too far from that goal, we have to rethink our priorities.

III – Moses goes further with his guidelines: “When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God.” To pray and give thanks before and after meals; to acknowledge that what we have comes from God’s hands; to be aware that everything we have is temporary, and that once we will leave everything here and only our faith will hold us; to sing in our heart and to sing together in the church – are some ways to praise the Lord. There are uncountable ways to praise the Lord, and each of us has to find the best way to do it.

IV – “Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, falling to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees.” Some verses further on Moses alerts: “You may say to yourself, ‘My power and the strength of my hands have produce this wealth for me. But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth” (v. 18).

Conclusion: This is the last Sunday of the Church Calendar. We can say with Samuel the Prophet: “Thus far has the Lord helped us” (1 Samuel 7:12). Next Sunday Advent begins again. We finish this year and we begin a new year with thanksgiving, in confidence that the same God who has brought us thus far will be with us in the future as well. We commit everything in His gracious hands, asking Him for wisdom to make a good balance between our physical needs and our spiritual needs, never forgetting that what we most need was done on the cross and is given by Jesus in His Word and in the Holy Sacraments: God’s love and His forgiveness. “Man doesn’t not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord”. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 20 November 2016