

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year B

By: [Billy McDermott](#)

Date: Sunday, 8/9/15 (08/12/12)

Words: 3734

The “Bread of Life” Discourses (third of five)

Sources:

SCB: ([St Charles](#))

Aquinas: (on [Psalm 34](#))

S: ([Sacerdos](#))

Augustine: ([Tractate 26](#))

SH: ([David Scott & Scott Hahn](#))

S:

- **THEME OF THE READINGS** Christ is the living bread essential to us as a pilgrim people called to an “impossible” love on earth, and eternal life with God: this is the essential message of today’s readings. Both the bread God gives Elijah (*First Reading*) and the manna he gives the Israelites (*Gospel*) prefigure the Eucharist. It enables them to complete their journey, to where God has called them; yet neither has the virtue and the power of the living bread, Jesus, who feeds us with his word and with his own flesh. Strengthened by this bread, we become able to follow his way of love, and the seed of eternal life is sown in us (*Second Reading and Gospel*).

1st Reading -1 Kings 19:4-8

Elijah went a day's journey into the desert, until he came to a broom tree and sat beneath it. He prayed for death saying: "This is enough, O LORD! Take my life, for I am no better than my fathers." He lay down and fell asleep under the broom tree, but then an angel touched him and ordered him to get up and eat. Elijah looked and there at his head was a hearth cake and a jug of water. After he ate and drank, he lay down again, but the angel of the LORD came back a second time, touched him, and ordered, "Get up and eat, else the journey will be too long for you!" He got up, ate, and drank; then strengthened by that food, he walked forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb.

Psalm 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall be ever in my mouth. Let my soul glory in the LORD; the lowly will hear me and be glad.

Glorify the LORD with me, Let us together extol his name. I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.

Look to him that you may be radiant with joy. And your faces may not blush with shame. When the afflicted man called out, the LORD heard, And from all his distress he saved him.

The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him and delivers them. Taste and see how good the LORD is; blessed the man who takes refuge in him.

Aquinas:

- Then at *in the lord*, the Psalmist begins to discourse on the fruits of praise. First he says *in the lord my soul will be praised*. For the good of the friend is always taken to be one's own good. Thus, he says *in the praise of God is also my own praise*. If God is great, then it holds that his friend is great.
- Next when he says *let them listen*, he instructs others first on the cause of praise, and then when he says *magnify* he instructs them on the act of praise itself. The principle of praise is interior joy. Hence he says *let the gentle listen*. Thus they will rejoice in all things that are of God. But the violent do not rejoice; they rebel. And so he says *let them listen*, since this kind of joy comes from hearing about the good deeds of others.
- Then when he says *magnify*, he urges others to praise. First to an interior praise, then to an exterior, when he says *and let us exalt*. On the first point he says *magnify the lord with me*, that is, magnify and praise God, since God's goodness and greatness are the same.
- Thus he says *magnify*, as does Luke 1: *my soul magnifies the lord*. This echoes what he said earlier: *May I bless the lord*. On the second point he says *and let us exalt his name*. Now one is said to be exalted up high when many exalt, as Ecclesiasticus says: *all you glorifying God, exalt Him, as much as you can*, etc. He then says *in the selfsame*, meaning together in harmony. And this echoes what he said earlier: *His praise is in my mouth*.
- Next when he says *I have sought*, he sets forth the content of the praise, namely, divine mercy on the one being heard. On this first point he does two things: first he establishes the clemency in his being heard; then he establishes the merit in his being heard, when he says *this pauper cried out*. On the first of these he does two things: first he sets out the benefit received; then he invites others to reap the same benefit when he says *he approaches*, etc. Concerning the first of these, he does three things: first, he sets forth his petition; second, he sets forth the hearkening, when he says *and he heard*; third, he shows the effect of the hearkening, when he says *and from all*.
- So first of all he says *I have sought the lord*. To see the lord Himself is the best of choices, as the lord's Prayer makes clear in its first petition: *Hallowed be Thy Name*. This is also confirmed in Isaiah 55: *seek the lord while he may be found*. Therefore, he says *I have sought*, as if to say, I have sought with great diligence. And thus follows the hearkening: *and he heard me*. The effect of the hearkening

is that *from my all tribulations he rescued me*. For sometimes he rescued the just from tribulations such that they would suffer no tribulations whatsoever, as in Job 5: *in six tribulations he will rescue you, and in the seventh evil will not touch you*. Sometimes he rescues the just so that they are not greatly troubled, as expressed in Psalm 93: *as many sorrows as there are in my heart, so many of your consolations have gladdened my soul*. 2 Corinthians 1 also expresses this: *the one who consoles us in every one of our tribulations*. This interior consolation always belongs to the saints. Moreover, he also rescues external relations, thus evil can never separate the saints from Christ, as expressed in Romans 8: *who will separate us from the charity of Christ?*

- Then when he says *approach him and be enlightened and your faces*, etc., he invites others to attain the benefit of praise. On this point he does two things: he first invites; second he describes what will come to pass for those who accept the invitation, when he says *and your faces will not be confused*. Therefore he says *approach him*, through faith and charity, as James 4 says: *come close to God and he will come close to you*. Then he adds *and be enlightened*. God is light and one who approaches the light will be illuminated. Isaiah 60: *Rise up* (through love) *and be enlightened*. Deuteronomy 33: *The man who sits at his feet will receive his teaching*. Now the result of this invitation is that *your faces will not be confused* by being refused. In other words, you will not suffer confusion *because there is none in those hoping in him* (Daniel 3). Or in another interpretation, *your faces*, that is, your minds, will not be confused by falling aside from truth.
- Then when he says *this poor man cried out*, he shows the merit of getting heard. On this point he does three things: first he describes the merit itself; second he promises a similar benefit to others, when he says *the angel encamps*; third he urges an experience, when he says *taste*. Therefore first he says *this poor man*. Now this verse is identical in meaning to the verse *I have sought*. Only the modes of speech differ: in the earlier verse he speaks in the first person, but in this later verse he speaks in the third person. So the only question is: who is this poor man? The Psalmist could be either pointing to himself or to Christ. In saying *poor man*, he hints at the merit of the petition: for the poor man is poor in spirit, or poor in pride, or poor in earthly desires. And such people get heard, as Judith 9 attests: *the prayer of the humble and gentle are always pleasing to you*. And Psalm 32: *he regarded the prayer of the humble*, etc. He cried out with the power of interior disposition, as in Isaiah 6: *The seraphim were crying out one to the other, saying Holy, Holy, Holy, etc.*
- Second, when he says *the Angel encamps*, he promises a similar benefit, as if he were saying: others will be heard just like the poor man. Now many codices have *the Angel of the lord encamps*. Jerome has *the Angel of the lord encircles about those who fear him*. The Psalmist says therefore *the Angel of the lord*, in offering protection by the splendor of his light, *encamps around them*. As Psalm 124 says: *round about it are his mountains*, namely Angels. And in 4 Kings 6 [2 Chronicles 32:7]: *many more are with us than with them*. And farther on: *behold the*

- mountain*, etc. Therefore the Angel encamps, that is, sets up camp. Hebrews 1: *all are ministering spirits*.
- *And he will save them*, namely by fighting off the enemy and Demons. Judith 7: *the children of Israel do not put their trust in the lance or arrow, but the mountains defend them*, namely Angels, or Christ. Isaiah 9, according to the Septuagint: *he will be called the Angel of great counsel*. For insofar as he is man he is sent by God. Or another reading is that Angel signifies the prelate of the Church, as in Malachi 2: *The Angel of the lord of hosts*. For the prelates of the Church ought to guard their flock.
 - Third, when the Psalmist says *taste and see how sweet*, he urges an experience. On this point he does two things: he exhorts others first to experience friendship with God and second to keep the fear of God, when he says *fear*. On the first point he does two things: first he urges the experience; second he describes the effect of the experience, when he says *and see how*.
 - And so he says *taste and see*, etc. Now the experience of anything comes through the senses but in different ways, depending on whether the object is close or at some distance. If it is removed at a distance, then the experience of it comes through sight, smell or hearing. If it is close, then touch and taste come into play, but each in its own way. For touch senses the outside of the object, whereas taste senses the inside. Now God is not far from us nor outside us, but rather He is in us, as Jeremiah 14 says: *You are in us, O lord*. Thus the experience of divine goodness is called tasting, as 1 Peter 2 says: *but if you taste how sweet*, etc. And at the end of Proverbs: *She tasted and saw that her dealings were good*.
 - Next he shows that the effect of this experience is twofold: the certitude of understanding and the security of love. With respect to the first effect he says *see*. Now, although in the physical world something is first seen and then tasted, in the spiritual world it is just the opposite. For one who does not taste does not know. Thus he says first *taste* and then *see*. With respect to the second effect he says *how sweet is the lord*. Wisdom 12: *O lord, how good and sweet is your spirit in us!* Psalm 30: *How great is the abundance of your sweetness*.
 - Then he says *Blessed the man who hopes in him*. Isaiah 30: *Blessed are all those who long for him*.

2nd Reading - Ephesians 4:30-5:5

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were sealed for the day of redemption. All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ.

So be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us as a sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma.

Gospel - John 6:41-51

The Jews murmured about Jesus because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven," and they said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph? Do we not know his father and mother? Then how can he say, 'I have come down from heaven?'" Jesus answered and said to them, "Stop murmuring among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him, and I will raise him on the last day. It is written in the prophets: *They shall all be taught by God*. Everyone who listens to my Father and learns from him comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world."

Augustine:

- These Jews were far off from the bread of heaven, and knew not how to hunger after it. They had the jaws of their heart languid; with open ears they were deaf, they saw and stood blind. This bread, indeed, requires the hunger of the inner man: and hence He saith in another place, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." But the Apostle Paul says that Christ is for us righteousness. And, consequently, he that hungers after this bread, hungers after righteousness,—that righteousness however which cometh down from heaven, the righteousness that God gives, not that which man works for himself. For if man were not making a righteousness for himself, the same apostle would not have said of the Jews: "For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and wishing to establish their own righteousness, they are not subject to the righteousness of God." Of such were these who understood not the bread that cometh down from heaven; because being satisfied with their own righteousness, they hungered not after the righteousness of God.
- God's righteousness here means, not that wherein God is righteous, but that which God bestows on man, that man may be righteous through God. But again, what was the righteousness of those Jews? A righteousness wrought of their own strength on which they presumed, and so declared themselves as if they were fulfillers of the law by their own virtue. But no man fulfills the law but he whom grace assists, that is, whom the bread that cometh down from heaven assists.
- Charity, that is, love, not of money, but of God; love, not of earth nor of heaven, but of Him who made Heaven and earth. Whence can man have that love? Let us hear the same: "The love of God," saith he, "is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." Wherefore, the Lord, about to give the Holy Spirit, said that Himself was the bread that came down from heaven, exhorting us to believe on Him. For to believe on Him is to eat the living bread. He that believes eats; he is sated invisibly, because invisibly is he born again. A babe within, a new man within. Where he is made new, there he is satisfied with food.

- Noble excellence of grace! No man comes unless drawn. There is whom He draws, and there is whom He draws not; why He draws one and draws not another, do not desire to judge, if thou desirest not to err. Accept it at once and then understand; thou art not yet drawn? Pray that thou mayest be drawn. What do we say here, brethren? If we are “drawn” to Christ, it follows that we believe against our will; so then is force applied, not the will moved. A man can come to Church unwillingly, can approach the altar unwillingly, partake of the sacrament unwillingly: but he cannot believe unless he is willing. If we believed with the body, men might be made to believe against their will. But believing is not a thing done with the body. Hear the apostle: “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” And what follows? “And with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” That confession springs from the root of the heart. Sometimes thou hearest a man confessing, and knowest not whether he believes. But thou oughtest not to call him one confessing, if thou shouldest judge him to be one not believing. For to confess is this, to utter the thing that thou hast in thy heart: if thou hast one thing in thy heart, and another thing on thy tongue, thou art speaking, not confessing. Since, then, with the heart man believeth on Christ, which no man assuredly does against his will, and since he that is drawn seems to be as if forced against his will, how are we to solve this question, “No man cometh unto me, except the Father that sent me draw him”?
- If he is drawn, saith some one, he comes unwillingly. If he comes unwillingly, then he believes not; but if he believes not, neither does he come. For we do not run to Christ on foot, but by believing; nor is it by a motion of the body, but by the inclination of the heart that we draw nigh to Him. This is why that woman who touched the hem of His garment touched Him more than did the crowd that pressed Him. Therefore the Lord said, “Who touched me?” And the disciples wondering said, “The multitude throng Thee, and press Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched me?” And He repeated it, “Somebody hath touched me.” That woman touched, the multitude pressed. What is “touched,” except “believed”? Whence also He said to that woman that wished to throw herself at His feet after His resurrection: “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to the Father.” Thou thinkest me to be that alone which thou seest; “touch me not.” What is this? Thou supposest that I am that alone which I appear to thee: do not thus believe; that is, “touch me not for I am not yet ascended to the Father.” To thee I am not ascended, for thence I never departed. She touched Him not while He stood on the earth; how then could she touch Him while ascending to the Father? Thus, however, thus He willed Himself to be touched; thus He is touched by those by whom He is profitably touched, ascending to the Father, abiding with the Father, equal to the Father.
- Do not think that thou art drawn against thy will. The mind is drawn also by love. Nor ought we to be afraid, lest perchance we be censured in regard to this evangelic word of the Holy Scriptures by men who weigh words, but are far removed from things, most of all from divine things; and lest it be said to us, “How can I believe with the will if I am drawn?” I say it is not enough to be drawn

by the will; thou art drawn even by delight. What is it to be drawn by delight? "Delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thy heart." There is a pleasure of the heart to which that bread of heaven is sweet. Moreover, if it was right in the poet to say, "Every man is drawn by his own pleasure," not necessity, but pleasure; not obligation, but delight,—how much more boldly ought we to say that a man is drawn to Christ when he delights in the truth, when he delights in blessedness, delights in righteousness, delights in everlasting life, all which Christ is? Or is it the case that, while the senses of the body have their pleasures, the mind is left without pleasures of its own? If the mind has no pleasures of its own, how is it said, "The sons of men shall trust under the cover of Thy wings: they shall be well satisfied with the fullness of Thy house; and Thou shalt give them drink from the river of Thy pleasure. For with Thee is the fountain of life; and in Thy light shall we see light"? Give me a man that loves, and he feels what I say. Give me one that longs, one that hungers, one that is travelling in this wilderness, and thirsting and panting after the fountain of his eternal home; give such, and he knows what I say. But if I speak to the cold and indifferent, he knows not what I say. Such were those who murmured among themselves. "He whom the Father shall draw," saith He, "cometh unto me."

- But what is this, "Whom the Father shall draw," when Christ Himself draws? Why did He say, "Whom the Father shall draw"? If we must be drawn, let us be drawn by Him to whom one who loves says, "We will run after the odor of Thine ointment." But let us, brethren, turn our minds to, and, as far as we can, apprehend how He would have us understand it. The Father draws to the Son those who believe on the Son, because they consider that God is His Father. For God begat the Son equal to Himself, so that he who ponders, and in his faith feels and muses that He on whom he has believed is equal to the Father, this same is drawn of the Father to the Son.