

Advent Midweek 2 –December 10, 2014

Text: Psalm 104:27-30

Theme "Jesus Shows Us Our Provider"

Textual Notes

V 27: kulam, “all of them.” This refers back to v 24, where the psalmist says, “In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.” Every creature looks to God for all that he needs.

'eleka yisaberun. The ESV translates this as “these all look to you,” but *savar*, “look,” is perhaps better understood as “wait” or “hope” to convey a sense of expectation.

be'ito, “in due season”; in other words, “at the right time.” The Greek versions have *eukairon*, the “right” and “proper time.”

V 28: Notice the verbs *yilqotun*, “they gather up,” and *yisbe'un*, “they are filled.” These are the same verbs used by Moses to describe the giving of the manna when the people gather up the manna (Ex 16:4) and are satisfied (Ex 16:8).

V 29: tastir paneka, “you hide your face.” The idea of God hiding his face occurs also in Pss 13:1; 44:24; 88:14. In Is 59:2, it is man’s sins that hide God’s face from us.

we'el-apharam yeshuvun, “return to their dust.” From dust, Adam was created (Gen 2:7), and as a result of the fall, it is to dust that we all shall return (Gen 3:19).

V 30: ruchaka, “your Spirit.” It is the “Spirit” (*ruach*) of God who moved over the face of the deep at creation (Gen 1:2).

yibare'un, “they are created” (note passive voice). The same root, *bara'*, “he created” (note active voice), is used in Gen 1:1 to describe the action of God as he creates the cosmos.

He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. (SC, explanation of the First Article)

These all look to you, to give them their food in due season. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground. (Ps 104:27–30)

The year was 1446 BC—some 3,460 years ago. The children of Israel had been in Egypt for 430 years and had suffered bitterly. But the God of Israel heard his people’s cry and raised up his servant Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt and into the land promised to their forefathers. Through Moses, he performed miracles to bring them out of bondage. Once they were set free by the Lord, though, they grumbled and complained. They accused Moses of bringing them out into the desert to die of starvation. Still, God had a purpose for these ungrateful people. He had provided freedom. Now he would provide

for them miraculous food in the wilderness—manna sent from heaven (Ex 16:1–21).

Martin Luther wrote about God the Father: “He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life” (SC, explanation of the First Article). The heavenly Father provides for all creation, not just in the extraordinary way of manna from heaven during the exodus and the wanderings of the Hebrews, but also in the ordinary way of our everyday needs—a provision we too often take for granted.

Even more important, the Father provides for our greatest need, far beyond the needs of the body. He sent John to prepare the way for the Lord, for Jesus, in our Gospel for this past Sunday (Mk 1:1–8, Gospel for Advent 2), and in Jesus, our provider is revealed.

The words of Psalm 104 elaborate a familiar prayer said by many before a meal: “The eyes of all look to you, O Lord” (cf. Ps 145:15). In these words, we acknowledge that all creatures, including each of us, “look to you, to give them their food in due season” (v 27). It is the entire created world that looks to the Father, of whom the psalmist wrote, “In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures” (104:24). But what does it mean to “look” to God for food or anything else? It means that all his creatures wait and hope for God to provide, with the certainty that he will do so. He has always provided all that we need, and he will always do so.

Yet God may not always provide according to our timetable. Rather, as the psalmist says, he gives “in due season” (v 27), that is to say, at the proper time, the right time, the time that’s best for us. There are some old sayings that have almost become clichés that describe how most of us approach God’s timing. “Lord, grant me patience—but hurry!” and “God answers prayer in three ways: yes, no, or wait a while.” Overused, perhaps, but true.

We’re told in Scripture that when the Father sent that miraculous food, manna, to the Israelites during the exodus, all they had to do was gather it up, and they were satisfied (Ex 16:4, 8). In our text, the psalmist uses the same words as Moses used to describe the manna in Exodus. However, in the psalm, it’s *all* creatures that receive the everyday gifts of the Lord’s daily provision: “When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things” (v 28).

Most of creation, of course, is quite naive to this; most creatures have no understanding that it’s their Creator who’s providing all these good things. But even how few *people* on earth realize that their jobs, their incomes, their grocery store purchases, their

tailored suits and blue jeans, their airline tickets to exotic vacation spots, and every breath they draw right here at home are provisions of the Father in heaven. Yet that's how everything created by God survives on earth, including all human beings— those who know the Father and those who do not.

Of course, none of those blessings could have come from a Father who was separated from his children. The psalm says to God, "When you hide your face, they are dismayed" (v 29a). God hides his face from those who sin (Is 59:2). That's you and me, every human soul. Therefore, we would receive no good thing from God unless he had somehow dealt with sin. What's more, as important as our bodily needs are, they are not our greatest need. And God the Father has provided for the greatest need as well.

To be a human being is to be different from all other life that God has created. We possess something that animals do not—an immortal soul. Life now and into eternity is not something we ourselves create or earn; it's provided by the Father. Death, on the other hand, is something we in fact have created and have earned. "When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust" (v 29). When our breath is gone, a pastor will speak at our graveside, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust."

But it is not the will of the Father that any should perish, and so he, our Provider, has provided the way of eternal life for all humanity. It is in Jesus that we see the ultimate provision of God. All we need to know about the Father we see in the Son, who said, "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (Jn 14:11). We see Jesus reaching out to provide for people wherever he goes. He blesses five loaves and two fish and feeds five thousand men plus women and children, not only meeting their need for food but also doing so overabundantly with twelve baskets of scraps left over (Jn 6:1-13). When his disciples had fished all night and caught nothing, Jesus told them to let down their nets again, and when they did, the nets were so full of fish that they began to break. When they put the fish in their boats, there were so many that the boats began to sink (Lk 5:1-7).

But all the miracles of provision wrought by Jesus during his earthly ministry did not bring eternal life. That took something else—the ultimate provision of a sinless Lamb sacrificed in the place of sinful men and women. God the Father provided this Lamb in the person of his beloved Son. On that terrible Friday, this Lamb was mocked, beaten, crowned with thorns, and ultimately nailed to a cross and left to die. Hanging on that cross, he was taunted by the very crowds for whom he was suffering—even as he pleaded with his

Father to forgive them, for they did not know what they were doing. When he cried out "It is finished" and gave up his Spirit in death, the great and final provision was made.

One man, Joseph of Arimathea, stepped forward, thinking he could provide a final gift for Jesus—a tomb. Yet that tomb could never hold the Lord of Life. On the third day, Jesus rose from dead. When he rose from that sealed tomb, he sealed the Father's final provision of forgiveness, peace, salvation—and therefore also all those earthly gifts—to all humanity, including you and me.

The psalmist wrote, "When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground" (v 30). And so it is. The Spirit is sent. The Spirit points us to the Son, who has reconciled us with the Father. The God who daily provides all you need for this body and life also provides all you need to be certain of your salvation. He has united you to Jesus through your Baptism and has kept you in that baptismal grace. He continuously feeds you with the Son's own precious body and blood at this altar. He provides what you and I need the most: his word that we are forgiven and made whole.

The Israelites were brought out of Egypt by the mighty hand of God, and, as St. Paul wrote, "All were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor 10:2). Though they were to wander in the wilderness for forty years before entering the Promised Land, God provided miraculous food, called "manna," which sustained them on the way. So it is that we have been called out of bondage to sin, death, and the devil by our Baptism into Christ and fed with the miraculous food of the blessed Sacrament all through our earthly pilgrimage. All this is provided by our Father and revealed in Jesus.

Let us pray:

These all look to you, to give them their food in due season. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.

To him, this the only God, through Jesus Christ—to him alone "be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen" (Jude 25).