

LENT 4

THE COLLECT

GRANT, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of thy grace may mercifully be relieved; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.



1. What do we deserve for our evil deeds?
A. To be _____ (Psalm 107:17)
2. How are we relieved from punishment?
A. By the comfort of God's _____ (Ephesians 2:8)

INTRODUCTION.

Along with the Collect, the Prayer Book also give us Scripture readings for each week. These passages have usually been designed to complement each other and the Collect often reflects a sentiment found in them. The Scripture passages originally assigned to this Sunday were about feasts: The feast in the wilderness (St. John 6) and Joseph feasting his brethren (Genesis 43). That is the reason why this Sunday is called the Sunday of Refreshment, and the Collect chosen for this week asks for merciful relief. It comes in the middle of Lent to teach us that God will not always be chiding, that He relieves and refreshes us, even when we deserve punishment.

Now last Sunday we thought about our giving something to God, but we read today how Christ gives something to us. When He fed those people they came round Him the next day to be fed again. But Christ told them He wanted to feed their souls, and just as He had given bread to feed their bodies, so He would give Himself to feed their souls.

He means to tell us that what bread is to our bodies, so He Himself is to our souls. In other words, that the bread as it feeds our bodies is a picture of Christ as He feeds our souls. He is the Bread of Life. Let's consider how Bread is a good "picture" of Christ.



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I. BREAD IS PROVIDED.

1. **In all places for all peoples:**—Corn of one sort or other grows over large areas, and is carried everywhere—rice, maize, wheat, barley, oats, &c. There are very different kinds of food—for the king in his palace and for paupers in the work-house—but there is one kind in which both share, that is upon both tables, and that is bread. Different kinds of food are served at different meals. But one kind appears at all meals, and that is—bread.
2. **Here, then, is the picture.** What does it mean? That Christ is needed by, and is provided for, all kinds of people—black, white, red, yellow, old and young, rich and poor, wise and foolish; and in all places—north and south, east and west; and at all times—in joy and sorrow, in wealth and poverty, in health and sickness, in life and death. No soul can do without Christ; all need Him, at all times, and He offers Himself to all.

II. BREAD IS PREPARED.

1. **We do not eat raw corn.** It is reaped, threshed, ground, baked, and only then is it ready for food; and, if corn could feel, all this would give it a great deal of pain. There's the picture. Now what does it mean? Likewise, the Son of God became a man, went through all our experiences, and, at last, suffered and died upon the cross to become the food of our souls (I Corinthians 11:24-25).

III. BREAD IS PARTAKEN OF.

1. **Bread will not feed us if we only think about it.** We must receive it, and eat it. Now what does this part of the picture mean? People sometimes suppose it will do if they hear about Christ, read about Him, think about Him; and many suppose it will do if they feel about Him. But will it? No. That is not enough. We must receive Him and partake of Him. But you say, How can we do this? Let me try to show you.
2. **When, in penitence, we take Christ's promise** and are comforted, we feed on Him. When, in trouble, we take Christ's sympathy and are cheered by it, we feed on Him. When, in perplexity, we take Christ's directions and are guided, we feed on Him. When in temptations and weakness, we take Christ's example and are strengthened by it, we feed on Him. And most of all when, in Holy Communion, we take the Bread and Wine in faith as He commanded, then we take Himself, His very nature and life, into our souls, just as in eating we take bread into our bodies.
3. **Bread gives us enjoyment, satisfaction, and strength.** How much our souls need the true Bread, as our bodies need material bread!

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