

# MANNA IN THE WILDERNESS

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Old Testament Lesson; Exodus 16:2-15

Epistle Lesson; Ephesians 4:17-24

Gospel Lesson; John 6:24-35

Sermon Text; Exodus 16:2-15

Today's sermon text is our Old Testament lesson, recorded for us in Exodus, chapter 16, looking at verses 2 – 15.

In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.”...

Then the LORD said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.”

So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “In the evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of Egypt, and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, because He has heard your grumbling against Him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?” Moses also said, “You will know that it was the LORD when He gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because He has heard your

grumbling against Him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD.”

Then Moses told Aaron, “Say to the entire Israelite community, ‘Come before the LORD, for He has heard your grumbling.’”

While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud.

The LORD said to Moses, “I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, ‘At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.’”

That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor.

When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, “‘What is it?’”

For they did not know what it was.

Moses said to them, “It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat. This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Each one is to gather as much as he needs. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.’”

These are Your Words, Heavenly Father. Lead us in the way of truth. Your word is truth.

Amen

About three weeks ago, there were there 30 people from here at Holy Cross that went on a journey in a charter bus. There were ten other people from other area congregations, totaling about 40 in all. That charter bus set out on a journey to Seattle, Washington, for the Lutheran Youth Association Convention, the LYA Convention. As those youth and people gathered on the bus, they brought plenty of food. They brought plenty of water. About every four hours, we

would stop to stretch our legs, to use the facilities, to get something to eat, and to get something to drink. The journey was going to be about 35 hours from here to Seattle. Imagine today if we doubled the length of that trip to 72 hours. And, imagine that there was no water on the bus and there was no water at any of the stops that we made. 72 hours of traveling. What do you think the youth on that bus would say to me? As the hours would continue, what do you think their attitude would be? Well, there would probably be anarchy. They would say, *“What have you done? You have taken us on this trip. There is no water on this bus. There is no water at any of these stops!”*

With that picture in your mind, we begin to understand the Children of Israel in our text for today. You see, today, as I read my text, it is not just forty people who are going on a journey. It is two million people that are going on a journey. It is a journey from Egypt to the land that God had promised to give to His people, the land of Canaan. Let's review some of those events that take place right prior to our text.

- It was God, it was the LORD, who had delivered His people from their bondage in Egypt.
- It was God who had rescued them from that 'rock and a hard place,' between the Egyptian army and the waters of the Red Sea.
- It was God who gave sweet water to the Children of Israel, when they came to a place called Marion. The water was bitter. So, God told Moses to throw a piece of wood into the water and it made it sweet for them to drink it.
- God provided an oasis in the desert, where there were 70 palm trees and 12 springs of water.

God provided for His people, on that journey toward the land that He had promised to give to them.

But now, as our text begins for today, the Children of Israel enter

into that region called The Desert of Sin. It was an arid region, an arid wasteland. We hear from our text what the Children of Israel were thinking. In verse three we are told they said, “If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.”

They wished they had died in Egypt. Well, God heard the grumbling of His people. He told Moses and Aaron to gather the whole assembly and He told them how He was going to provide for them. Each evening He would provide meat to eat and each morning He would provide bread. Remember this is two million people that we are talking about here! So, every evening there were enough quail, there were enough birds to satisfy the stomachs of those several million people. In the morning, there was enough bread, again for those several million people to eat.

Why did God do that? Well, God wanted to tell His people and show His people that He loved them and that He was going to provide for them. He had provided for their every need in Egypt and He was also going to provide for their every need on this journey to the land that He had promised to them. He wanted the people, in return, to put their trust in Him. He wanted the people, in return, to see His glory and to believe that He would do what He said.

That's what the First Commandment tells us to do. In the explanation it tells us to fear, love, and trust in God above all things. Just as God would take care of the Israelites, we know that we have a promise from God that He will also take care of us. And, He wants us to put our trust in Him, in return. For the Israelites, God provided for their physical needs by giving them bread to eat in the morning, and meat to eat in the evening.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, do you know that God also provides for all of your physical, daily needs? But, along with that, God has also provided for your spiritual needs, as well.

- God has delivered you, but not from Egypt. He has delivered you from your bondage of sin.
- He has rescued you, not from that rock and hard place between the Egyptian army and the waters of the Red Sea, but He has rescued you from your worries and your concerns in this 'wilderness' that we are walking through.
- God has given to you, not bitter water, but the 'sweet water' that we hear each and every Sunday, that Gospel message of Jesus, our Savior.
- God has given you an 'oasis'. Not seventy palm trees and twelve springs, but the 'oasis' of the rest for your souls.

God has also given you 'bread'. Not manna, but God has given to you Jesus. In our Gospel Lesson for today, Jesus talked about Himself. Here is what He said. “I am the bread of life.” That is the bread that God has given to you. Jesus said,

“I am the bread of life.

He who comes to me will never go hungry,  
and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”

So why is it, then, dear friends, that we grumble and complain against the LORD, or against those representatives that God has placed in our lives? For our young youth, (those who came up for our Children's Sermon this morning), maybe you grumble and complain with the bedtime that parents have established for you. For our high school youth, or our older youth – you grumble and complain about the early bed time and the homework that has to be done once school starts. For our young adults you grumble and complain with your children, “*I can't understand why they do the things that they do.*” Or, for those who are more mature – you grumble and complain about the weather, about work, about grandchildren. Why is it that we act like the Israelites and grumble and complain against God or those representatives that He has entrusted to us?

It is the New Testament that tells us not to grumble. It is the LORD, in our text for today, who showed us that He provided for His people, the Israelites. It is the scriptures that tell us that the LORD, that it is God, who will also provide for our daily needs. And when Jesus taught His disciples, and as we have learned the Lord's Prayer, Jesus also teaches us in the Fourth Petition to pray for our daily bread.

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

So, we don't need to worry about the future, because we know that God will provide for our daily needs. Jesus wants us to be content with what we have and not to worry about the future.

Well, what are those daily needs that the LORD provides for us? In our catechism, under this section of the Fourth Petition, it tells us what is meant by daily bread.

“Daily bread includes everything needed for this life such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, fields, cattle, money, goods, God-fearing spouse and children, faithful servants and rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, order, honor, true friends, good neighbors and the like.”

Again, God is going to provide for all of your daily needs. We don't need to worry about the future. Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, specifically tells us not to worry about our daily needs. He says, “Don't worry saying, 'What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or what shall we wear?' But, seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness and all of these things will be given to you, as well. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

The LORD has provided for all of your physical needs.

Dear fellow redeemed, the LORD has especially provided for your spiritual needs. It is Jesus, in our Gospel Lesson for today, who tells us specifically the spiritual needs that He has come to cover. Jesus said,

“It is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

Jesus has given you life. Jesus has given you life with Him in Heaven by giving Himself into death on the cross. Jesus laid down His life in death on the cross so you could have life to the fullest, and you could have life with Him in Heaven.

The Israelites wondered what was on the ground, in the morning when they came out. In Hebrew they said, “Manna.” In English, it means, “What is it?” God gave bread to provide for their physical needs. Well, praise God that He has provided for your spiritual needs.

**Jesus is our bread of life.**

**Jesus is our redeemer.**

He has bought us back from our sin, from death, and the devil. Jesus is our Savior. He has saved us from our sin by His death on the cross. We don't need to wonder who our 'manna' is. **Jesus is our bread of life.** And, He is our 'manna', as we walk through the wilderness of this life, on our journey toward the promised land of eternal life, with Him, in Heaven.

Amen