

Sermon on Exodus 16 prepared by Jonathan Shradar

Exodus 16:1-12 “They set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. [2] And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, [3] and the people of Israel said to them, “Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

[4] Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not. [5] On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.” [6] So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, “At evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, [7] and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against the LORD. For what are we, that you grumble against us?” [8] And Moses said, “When the LORD gives you in the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to the full, because the LORD has heard your grumbling that you grumble against him—what are we? Your grumbling is not against us but against the LORD.

[9] Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, ‘Come near before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.’” [10] And as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. [11] And the LORD said to Moses, [12] “I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.’” (ESV)

God provides for his people.

It is so good to be back with you after a two-week adventure with the family. Much needed change of pace and perspective... And to be back on the day we have our picnic... a day of fun.

On this trip, as parents will be familiar, I heard a couple of phrases a lot from the back seats... “Are we there yet?” & “I’m hungry!” It was with these refrains ringing in my ears that I opened Exodus 16 to continue our study of this Old, Old, Story. And more than ever we need the reminder we find in this story... the hope it points to.

This is the unfolding story of God’s redeeming work, all pointing to a massive crescendo in Scripture, the life and work of Christ. And it has been in the interactions with the people of Israel, their God-placed prophet-leader, and the opponents of God that we have been able to

recognize God's purpose, his power and that his plan is sometimes, no, all the time, quite different than we would expect.

The people that were hard-working slaves, were destined for the more important work of worshiping God, so he breaks the chains that keep them captive, miraculously bringing them through the sea, defeating Pharaoh's army. And now they are setting out on the journey that will bring them into the Promised Land - the country God was giving to them as a gift, to live and prosper in.

But the Israelites are not sitting in air conditioned comfort with their preferred toys before them. They are, all 2 million of them, walking in the desert, learning to trust this liberating God. But they have a long way to go... and they are hungry!

You can imagine it... (the dust, the people crammed together, the exhaustion of marching on).

So they complain... again raising a complaint to Moses that it would have been better to be slaves with full bellies in Egypt than to be free and wandering in the wilderness. While they grumble - a sinful distrust that they will wrestle with in the whole story - God works... just as he always does, in an amazing way to teach the people something about himself and the way he cares for them.

Exodus 16:13-18 "In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. [14] And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground. [15] When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat. [16] This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Gather of it, each one of you, as much as he can eat. You shall each take an omer, according to the number of the persons that each of you has in his tent.'" [17] And the people of Israel did so. They gathered, some more, some less. [18] But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat." (ESV)

Here at the beginning of the grand journey to promise, God provides for his people, and it is with provision that is Satisfying, Miraculous and Catalyzing. As we contemplate this provision we can find our satisfaction in that it all points to another bread that will come for all those that are hungry!

1) Satisfying

Quail by night, delicious regional meat to eat, and bread by day, every day. A gift, God providing. And it was satisfying. Now this is a word that I wrestled a bit with. We could call the manna and meat "abundant" in that it came from nowhere, was enough to feed 2 million people in the

desert - what a quantity it would be. More than they need. But it doesn't inspire gluttony - eating too much.

I also thought of "sufficient" because it was enough, just what they needed... but it seems more than that. It fills them, gives them the energy they need to hike home. It is a meal that satisfies, in this moment, their hunger.

His provision is satisfying. For the long haul.

Each day this bread, wheaties-like bread (wafers made with honey - graham crackers) litters the camp and is collected, each family taking what they need. No lacking. Tummies full of yummys. For 40 years. Need met with manna.

Relying not on their own ingenuity, their labor in the field, but being satisfied by the provision of God. "Bread to the full."

The day before the Sabbath there was a double portion, so that one day would be kept separate, and that portion would keep... but other days, if you took more than needed, it would spoil, fast. Every day God tested their faith in his providence. He was teaching them to trust him for their daily bread...

More than an answer to their hunger, this manna is an invitation to find their satisfaction in the giver of the meal.

Deuteronomy 8:3 "And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD." (ESV)

This is the point, to understand the source of what is needed for life... God let's them get hungry so that only he can meet their need, giving them bread so they could know that bread isn't the end all be all. But God's word is - his promise, his declaration.

They can know this, they can live by every word that comes from the Lord, be satisfied by it, because this provision is miraculous.

2) Miraculous

Quail for the whole camp... bread every day. This is no coincidence of migrating season or random food existence... this is an act of God. Only his hand can provide this way.

Like the plagues, like the parting of the sea, like the bitter water made sweet... God works supernaturally beyond what we can comprehend. Magic tricks are fun, they can make us

wonder, but they can all be explained... Here God has made something happen that is no slight of hand, it is real, true provision - Miraculously given for the duration of the wilderness experience.

Only he can do something like this; unquestionably his work. "Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God."

We have talked about it before, the attempt to reason away miracles in Scripture, but they are meant to be the evidence that God is telling the truth. That his power is real, that he can keep his word. And that is exactly what the manna is. A miracle.

A miracle that reveals his glory... in the daily gift of bread, seeing him for how wonderful he is, how great he is.

Like standing before the Grand Canyon! So it is standing before the meat and manna of Exodus 16. The impossible, accomplished. The gift given. When we experience this, we see more of his glory!

Can we tap into the satisfying, miraculous provision of God?! We are meant to, Israel is meant to... because the meat and manna are also catalyzing.

3) Catalyzing

A catalyst is something that gets you moving, causes activity.

This provision is meant for a response - a lifestyle change, a shift in how things are done. God provides not to keep Israel in their rut of complaining, but to give them something better to focus on, to move them into trusting him, excited by his plan and provision... his promise.

They live different because of this provision. The gather, they gain a new rhythm of life. Daily, weekly, routine of response.

Instituted into the provision is this new thing, the Sabbath, a day of rest, a day to keep separate for recognition of God, of his glory. **Exodus 16:23** "Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD..." (ESV)

A day to recenter, to make clear their source, the most important thing about them, that they belong to God. Brought on by the provision. It is the motivation for their life change.

The provision also fuels their march... it is energizing for all of life. Physically and spiritually satisfying...

It also moves them to look forward by looking back. While on vacation I have been researching some of my family tree... seeing who came before, from where I have descended. It is a fascinating endeavor, to know where you come from... and if we look at it right we see God's faithfulness to bring us to this place. The manna was a piece of provision that would be a memorial of God's care from generations to come. To remind them that **God provides for his people.**

Aaron was instructed to keep some of the manna - as a witness through all generations. So that even when the 40 years were up the people could look back at God's provision and trust him into the future, that his plan would be fulfilled.

Everything changed for the people the moment the manna came. And whether they got it or not, God's provision demands an embrace of his providence for all of life. That they would cling to him, attach themselves to him and nothing else.

This satisfying, miraculous and catalyzing provision of manna and meat. God provides for his people, giving us whatever we truly need.

This manna is preparing the people for provision to come... provision that we now look back on and embrace, celebrate, praise God for... the provision of Christ.

4) Christ

It is to another hungry bunch of people we go to as Jesus feeds thousands then goes away and the crowd tracks him down because they want more bread. Jesus tells this physically and spiritually hungry crowd that he is the bread, the provision of God.

John 6:25-33 "When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" [26] Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. [27] Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal. Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" [29] Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." [30] So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? [31] Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" [32] Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. [33] For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." (ESV)

Here is the kicker from Jesus...

John 6:35 “Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” (ESV)

He is the manna, the bread from heaven given by God... he is the provision promised, that will change everything. Like Israel, they grumbled at his claim..

John 6:47-51 “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. [48] I am the bread of life. [49] Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. [50] This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. [51] I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” (ESV)

“The manna in the wilderness was another type - something from the Old Testament that pointed to salvation in Christ. The manna taught Israel to depend on God for all their needs, but it had certain limitations. It was only bread; so it could only meet physical needs, and only for a little while. As Jesus pointed out, everyone who ate manna is now dead. Nevertheless, the bread taught people to look to God for their sustenance and salvation until he sent the true and living bread from Heaven. That bread came in the person and work of Jesus, who offered his body on the cross to give life to the world. The meaning of the manna is that all we need is Jesus.”

God provides for his people by giving himself, calling us to believe.

We are surely given physical provision, food, opportunity, resources... but in Christ we have been given the ultimate, most important provision of all.

Jesus, his life, his work on the cross, the power of his resurrection, is provision for all who believe.

- **Satisfying**... there is nowhere else to look, justified in him alone, made right with God by his blood.
- **Miraculous**... that he would take on our sin and give us his righteousness, his inheritance, his life. That we could be regenerated, with new hearts and headed toward a new glorified reality.
- **Catalytic**... changing everything, shifting our lives around him, for his glory, new purpose, new perspective, new values and aspirations.

As we embrace him, believe in him as the provision, we learn to trust him, to look forward to his final act of bringing us all the way home with him. We can celebrate in the process, keeping our eyes on him, that we would see his glory and spread it in our day. Fully relying on him.

As Christ sustains us from one day to the next, we are called to live in daily dependence upon his providence. Why does God tell us to trust him for our daily bread? Maxie Dunnam writes, “He does it for our sakes, that we may know the peace and strength that come from continual dependence upon him, the joyful life that is ours when we trust him and see the truth of our

trusting. The happiest people I know are not people who don't have any needs, but people who experience the meeting of their needs by God."

God has laid the manna before us... he has set himself, Jesus, as our provision, that all who believe in him would never die but have eternal, whole, purposeful life.

God provides for his people by giving himself, calling us to believe.

He gave himself for you. Will you believe? Will you let Jesus change your life, be the point of your life?

The manna in the wilderness gave Israel what they needed to walk forward, to keep on. The manna that is Christ gives us what we need to keep on, to move forward, to give ourselves over to something worthwhile, eternal and important.

Surrender your attempts to generate a miracle you could never achieve... even your rejection of what God has provided.

Eat up - trust in Jesus. Believe that on the cross he met the full measure of wrath that your deserved for your sin. That he has given you his righteousness. And that nothing can change you status when he has claimed you. Let this truth melt your heart and leave you in awe.

Then let Jesus change your life. Abide in him, remain in him. Live from his finished work, his grace. All of your effort, not earning salvation, but revealing it, showing others that you have found what truly satisfies. It's not riches, popularity, relationships... it's not even comfort or how amazing your are or are not. It is Jesus. That he loves you, and holds you forever.

Because that is true, you can follow him, taking up your cross, living through hardship with hope and joy, giving of yourself for others... as your fortified by the gospel - like popeye eating spinach!

Eat with others (no one in Israel ate alone) - latch on to the family of faith - invest in each other, the church, the kingdom. Because there is nothing better than his purpose, his renown. Let abiding in Christ be your rule of life, to engage, to drink the depths of his good news for you.

God provides for his people... in Christ. How then will you live?

We do not gather flakes from the ground... but each day and all the more on his day, we look to Jesus, to his cross, his resurrection... We look to Christ as our provision, our salvation, our hope. Look to him.

Matthew 6:9-13 "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our

debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. - Amen.