

## EXODUS 16:1-35 1-7-18

### *The Bread of Heaven*

Exodus 16:**1-35** *Then they set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the sons of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt. 2 The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. 3 The sons of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the Lord's hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we 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 will 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 or not they will walk in My instruction. 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 sons of Israel, "At evening you will know that the Lord has brought you out of the land of Egypt; 7 and in the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, for He hears your grumbings against the Lord; and what are we, that you grumble against us?" 8 Moses said, "This will happen when the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening, and bread to the full in the morning; for the Lord hears your grumbings which you grumble against Him. And what are we? Your grumbings are not against us but against the Lord." 9 Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, 'Come near before the Lord, for He has heard your grumbings.'"* 10 *It came about as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. 11 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 12 "I have heard the grumbings of the sons of Israel; speak to them, saying, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God.'"* 13 *So it came about at evening that the quails came up and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. 14 When the layer of dew evaporated, behold, on the surface of the wilderness there was a fine flake-like thing, fine as the frost on the ground. 15 When the sons 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 which the Lord has given you to eat. 16 This is what the Lord has commanded, 'Gather of it every man as much as he should eat; you shall take an omer apiece according to the number of persons each of you has in his tent.'"* 17 *The sons of Israel did so, and some gathered much and some little. 18 When they measured it with an omer, he who had gathered much had no excess, and he who had gathered little had no lack; every man gathered as much as he should eat. 19 Moses said to them, "Let no man leave any of it until morning." 20 But they did not listen to Moses, and some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul; and Moses was angry with them. 21 They gathered it morning by morning, every man as much as he should eat; but when the sun grew hot, it would melt. 22 Now on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, 23 then he said to them, "This is what the Lord meant: Tomorrow is a sabbath observance, a holy sabbath to the Lord. Bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and*

*all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning.” 24 So they put it aside until morning, as Moses had ordered, and it did not become foul nor was there any worm in it. 25 Moses said, “Eat it today, for today is a sabbath to the Lord; today you will not find it in the field. 26 Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the sabbath, there will be none.” 27 It came about on the seventh day that some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. 28 Then the Lord said to Moses, “How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My instructions? 29 See, the Lord has given you the sabbath; therefore He gives you bread for two days on the sixth day. Remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.” 30 So the people rested on the seventh day. 31 The house of Israel named it manna, and it was like coriander seed, white, and its taste was like wafers with honey. 32 Then Moses said, “This is what the Lord has commanded, ‘Let an omerful of it be kept throughout your generations, that they may see the bread that I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.’” 33 Moses said to Aaron, “Take a jar and put an omerful of manna in it, and place it before the Lord to be kept throughout your generations.” 34 As the Lord commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the Testimony, to be kept. 35 The sons of Israel ate the manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate the manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.*

Do you remember last week’s sermon? The one on grumbling. Well, one of our favorite things to grumble about is change. There is something about human nature that makes us look back on the way things were and pretend that it was all better back then and back there. People talk about the good ole days. Do you know how many country western singers it takes to change a light bulb? Five, one to change the bulb and the other four to sing about how much they long for the old one. I’m afraid that this romanticizing of the past is partly a byproduct of our natural but sinful discontentment. That is certainly the case with the children of Israel who found themselves travelling the desert and growing hungry. And they expressed their need for food by doing what? Grumbling. They grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. Now, you got a whole sermon on this last time but there were two points I never got to that I want to give you now. First applies to all of us who grumble. My simple point is that it is okay, it is even good for you to express your needs either to God or to individuals in leadership. It’s fine for you to let your boss know your thoughts or tell your parents what you believe would be best, or inform the pastor of your feelings about a matter. Letting your feelings, even your complaints, be known is okay. There is a difference between that and grumbling. You understand that don’t you? Here’s the difference. Your family is on a trip and one of your kids says, “Hey, Dad, I’m getting kind of hungry when are we planning to stop for supper?” Nothing wrong with that is there? Grumbling is when they say,

*“When are we going to eat, I’m about to starve to death.”* And then maybe 15 minutes later they repeat their bleating. That is grumbling. It is a sour, negative, condemning way of expressing a need or a want. We choose to do the opposite. When you can, be affirming, be cheerful, be thankful. Often the direction of our grumbling, like it was for the Israelites, is toward our leadership. Do you express appreciation to your leaders? In the family? In the workplace? In the community or church? Do they know what you esteem about them and how much you are behind them? Someone said that we in the church ought to be like a flock of geese who fly together in pattern and all honk encouragement to the leader. I know I am frequently encouraged by some of you and your words and deeds of kindness toward me. Moses could have used some of that, but all he got was grumbles.

Now, I want to move to our main consideration for today and that is the miracle of divine provision which we call *manna*. The main lesson for us from Exodus 16 is that God will meet the needs of his people. God will meet the needs of His people. He doesn’t always do it the same way, but He always does it. This morning I direct our meditations toward the five ways God met the needs of His grumbling people.

Point #1 is that God met their needs graciously. What I mean is that without grace, without a love for the unlovely, without mercy for the undeserving God would never have done this. After what the sons of Israel said to God’s appointed leaders, it’s amazing God didn’t just beam them all back to their Egyptian bondage. If you were reading this for the first time and you came to verse 4, where God says, “Behold, I will rain...” you would expect the next words to be “fire and brimstone from heaven” as in “I will rain fire and brimstone from heaven upon you ungrateful grumble-muffins.” But no, the Father of patience, and the God of all mercies says, “I will rain bread from heaven for you.” God is wonderful and kind and good to persons who deserve exactly the opposite from His hand. That is what it means to be a God of grace. He is good to me not for anything I am but for everything He is. He is gracious to sinners. He is gracious to grumblers. He has continued to rain blessings on my head year after year while I have grieved Him and offended Him and let Him down. He is gracious. Does that mean I can sin as I please and not worry about any consequences? No. Grace is not God’s only quality and we respond rightly to grace when we make it our inspiration to love God, our merciful Father, more fervently and when we make it our example to so relate to others and to keep on loving that griping child or that snooty neighbor. So, God graciously met the needs of His undeserving people.

Secondly, God sweetly met the needs of His people. What I mean is this. Not only does God deal kindly to provide the needs of sinners, He goes a step further and meets those needs with a touch of honey. He doesn't just give us bread; He gives us muffins. This manna stuff the people ate not only sustained them physically, it tasted good too. It said it was like wafers with honey. Gluten? No gluten? Who knows, but you see, God could have rained from heaven something like rice cake which is nourishing but tasteless. But God, who understands His creatures, gave them something tasty to fill their tummies. He is the God who saves from guttermost to uttermost. He turns our mourning into what? Not sitting, not walking, but dancing. God's salvation is more than survival it is life abundant and joyful. That is why Watts in his hymn writes that the "hill of Zion yields a 1000 sacred sweets" even before we get to heaven and before we walk the streets of gold. God is plenty gracious just to keep us alive but He goes further and satisfies our hearts with good things. O taste and see that the Lord is good. He sweetly meets the needs of His people.

Thirdly, God daily met the needs of His people. Again in verse 4 He says, "the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day." That is, He wasn't going to bring them a freezer full of the stuff. He was going to meet their needs one day at a time and no more. He even planned it that way to test their obedience and their trust. *21 They gathered it morning by morning, every man as much as he should eat; but when the sun grew hot, it would melt.* It makes me think of the verse in Lamentation about the mercy of God being new every morning. They had to look to God anew every single day. If God didn't send manna they wouldn't eat. Why did God arrange this miracle in that way? We are told. Deuteronomy 8:3 *He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.* What's the point? The point is that we are ultimately dependent not on any thing or some thing but we depend on somebody. God used the manna experience to teach about trust. The point was that you can't trust in your riches, or in your manna, you have to trust in God. I remember hearing a story years ago, I forget the source, but it was about a child who was taken out of some war-torn area and moved into an orphanage. This child had been half-starved to death and after he came to the orphanage he was well-fed and gained strength but his caregivers noticed that he still did not sleep well at night. He was restless until one worker discovered that if you let the child go to bed holding a loaf of bread he rested peacefully. His problem was anxiety over whether he would be fed the next day. Your kids don't need that, do they? They can sleep at night because they have

learned to trust you. When you have a Good Provider you don't worry about provisions. That is what God wanted to develop in His people. He was saying, "You don't need manna. You need me." Is that a lesson for you too? Some of the people in Exodus took a while to learn it. Moses told them to eat all that they took but some apparently wanted to save it. *20 they did not listen to Moses, and some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul.* The very nature of manna required them to look to God every day. It made them God-dependent and that is how we are to be. He could have supplied the children of Israel with trailers-full of manna but He doesn't do it that way, partly to build their faith and keep them looking to Him. God has His reasons for meeting our needs daily.

Our fourth major point is that God met the need of His people weekly. Now, obviously I don't mean to contradict what I just said. When I say God met their needs weekly I am pointing out that God's provisions indicated a sensitivity to the calendar which He ordained, that of a seven day week. *5 On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.* What is the reason behind that? God was directing them to keep a seventh day sabbath. On that day they were not to go out to gather food. So, God supplied them with enough on day six to last them two days. But, wait a second. I thought this stuff wouldn't keep? It bred worms. That's true but we are dealing here with the supernatural. *24 So they put it aside until morning, as Moses had ordered, and it did not become foul nor was there any worm in it.* And when the sabbath day came lo and behold there was no manna to gather anyway. We will talk more about the sabbath when we get to the ten commandments but for now I want you to understand that God instituted, way back in Genesis, the sabbath principle that one day in every seven-day cycle is to be kept special and holy. This was a celebration of creation. This was a celebration of God's provision and care. To take a day off was an expression of trust in the God who provides. The 6 and 1 cycle of life comes from way back in Genesis 2 and is relevant for us today.

Our fifth major point is that God met the needs of His people continually. He did it daily and weekly and continually. That is, God provided manna six days a week for how long? Forty years. That's not how long it took them to walk to Canaan; that is how long they wandered the wilderness after they rejected God's promise of the land. *35 The sons of Israel ate the manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate the manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.* When we get to Joshua five and the people have entered the Promised Land, ready to take it, then God suspends the flow of manna so they can eat of the fruit of the land, but for forty

years it was there for them. Incredible! Incredible that God would be so kind to those who strayed so far. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. This people learned that His mercies never come to an end, they were new every morning. Now, don't think manna was all the people had to eat during those forty years. I'm sure they enjoyed some other things, but manna was the staple of their diet. Keith Green wrote a cute song about this called, "So You Wanna Go Back to Egypt." It says, "In the morning it's manna hotcakes. We snack on manna all day. And they sure had a good one last night for dinner - flaming manna soufflé." He mentions them eating manna waffles, manna burgers, manna bagels, filet of manna, mannacotti, and bamanna bread. Numbers 11 says the people would grind it, beat it, boil it and make cakes with it. I expect that in forty years they did get pretty creative.

Now look at verse 32 *Then Moses said, "This is what the Lord has commanded, 'Let an omerful of it be kept throughout your generations, that they may see the bread that I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.'* When the forty years were over God didn't want them forgetting about how faithful He was to them. We are wise to remember the great deeds of God in history, maybe through memorials and museums which will encourage our faith in the power of God. There is real value to remembering the past. This is the kind of thing some businessmen do when they put their first dollar on the wall. The links we keep with the past can be links with the Lord who is the God of all history. So tell me, do you have some manna stored away somewhere? Do you have mementoes or photos or written records that speak to you of God's former kindness?

Those then are the five ways we see God meeting the needs of His people. Graciously, sweetly, daily, weekly and continually. The application for us is to trust Him for all our provisions. Don't worry. Our God provides. For you who don't know Jesus-- to you I speak as one who has tasted the goodness of God, as one beggar telling another where he can find food and I urge you to look to Christ as your Savior from sin. In the sixth chapter of John's gospel Jesus compares Himself to the manna from heaven. There Jesus calls Himself the Bread of Heaven. You see, the Old Testament manna is a type of the coming Christ. It is a prophetic sign which points to Jesus. Ponder how Jesus is like this manna.

First of all, Jesus is like the manna because without Him you will starve spiritually. The children of Israel were in a desert, there was nothing for them to eat where they were and spiritually speaking so are you. There is nowhere else you can go to meet the needs of your soul. There is no

one else so bold as to offer you forgiveness for your sins. In John 6 Jesus teaches his listeners about him being the bread of life and some were offended over his remarks and withdrew from him. **66-68** *As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. 67 So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" 68 Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. I get the impression that Peter was a little confused by Jesus at this point too, but his confession is clear. He says, "Hey, even if I wanted too I couldn't find anywhere else to go. I want eternal life and you alone can offer that."* My friend, you have profound spiritual needs that only Jesus can meet.

Secondly, Jesus is like the manna in that He came down from heaven. Jesus was supernatural. He had no father, and in a sense, no mother. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. In the same way that manna came down from heaven. It wasn't the result of clever cross-pollination or anything like that. They didn't invent this stuff at Monsanto. It was the gift of heaven as is the Lord Jesus for the Bible says that what man could not do God did by sending His own son to become our Salvation.

Thirdly, Jesus is like the manna in that He came to an unworthy people. Romans 5 says that while we were sinners Christ died for us. It was while we were His enemies that Jesus came. Jesus didn't come down because he was so pleased with humanity's efforts to reach him. He didn't come down because He was requested so frequently. Jesus came to call sinners, rebels, lost people to repentance. Please don't think that you'll become a Christian once you've cleaned up your life. If you clean up your life then you've blown it, Jesus only came for sinners. Would that be you?

Fourthly, Jesus is like the manna in that He meets your greatest need and sweetens your life. The Bible says your greatest need is to be forgiven of your sin so you can be friends with God and have eternal life. John 6:**49** *Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.* I mean, the manna was good, but it wasn't that good. It wasn't a ticket to eternal life. Now listen to this John 6:**50-51ab** *This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down out of heaven.* Again Jesus says in **58** (NLT) *I am the true bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will not die as your ancestors did (even though they ate the manna) but will live forever.* Now if your cousin says this you may write it off as the words of some looney but this is Jesus. When Jesus says this you listen up. And He says if you eat of Him, the bread of Life you will live forever. What's he mean? Just a few verses earlier He tells us **47** *Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.* He who believes in

Jesus, has eternal life. You take the bread of heaven by placing your faith in Jesus. Through His death and resurrection Jesus gives life eternal to anyone who puts their trust in Him. Would you do that? Isn't it time you stepped across that line? What you will find is not only the hope of eternal life made real but you will find a walk with God a genuine, sincere spiritual life that is abundant. This Jesus provides for He is the bread of heaven, fulfilling and sweet.