

Daily Bread
January 10, 2016

So we have begun a new year. It may not seem much different to you than the previous year. Some of you continue to struggle with financial pressures. Some of you continue to struggle with physical problems. Some of you continue to struggle with relationship issues. Many of us are too busy and can't get on top of our To Do List. Most of us have some need that we are having trouble meeting.

I have good news for you this morning. You have a Savior who can meet your need. He can help you get through whatever it is you are facing this year.

(prayer)

For much of human history most people believed the world was flat. Sailors were afraid of sailing too far from sight of land for fear that they would fall off the edge.

Today, we know that the world is round. There is no edge from which to fall. Gravity holds us to the surface of the planet. So despite how many people believed the earth to be flat, they were wrong. Just because something is commonly believed does not make it true.

There are many such common beliefs in our world today. One such statement that some Christians believe is this: **God will not give you more than you can handle.**

You might believe that. Or maybe you have heard people say it and wondered if it is true. I, for one, do not believe it to be true. No such promise appears in the Bible. Instead, the Bible reveals that God often gives us more than we can handle. He does so, so that we will learn our need of God. Jesus speaks of that in today's Bible passage.

Luke 4:1-4 (NIV) Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.'"

Jesus quotes here from the Bible book of Deuteronomy. We need to go there and see the full quote in its context in order to see what it means as used by Jesus.

The context of this passage is that the Israelites, after roaming the Sinai Peninsula for 40 years, are getting ready to enter the land of Canaan, the land promised to them by God. The Canaanites were horribly sinful and had been that way for about 600 years. After giving them at least that long to change their evil ways, God is going to bring His judgment upon them. God will use the Israelites to do this.

In Deuteronomy 8, Moses is instructing the Israelites as they prepare to enter the land of Canaan. Let's see what he tells them.

Deuteronomy 8:1-3 (NIV) Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land that the LORD promised

on oath to your forefathers. Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

How did He cause them to hunger? He led them out of Egypt and into the wilderness where there was not enough natural food for them all to live on. Resources were short. Other than the animals they brought with them, there were not enough resources to provide food for all the people. They had no other option than to turn to God.

God proved that He could provide for them by giving them Manna to eat. Look with me at the manna.

Exodus 16:4-5, 13-16 (NIV) 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."

...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.'"

God provided something unnatural. He provided something miraculous. No one had ever seen manna before. It was not something that grew upon the earth. It was not a plant in nature, either wild or cultivated. It was brand new and unlike anything ever seen by anyone before.

God purposely, miraculously provided it every morning for six days in a row. God never provided it on the seventh day, the Sabbath. They were to gather two days worth on the sixth day. Nowhere in nature do we see that kind of regularity. We can never say, "It always rains on Mondays" or "It is always sunny on Sundays." Nature is not that regular. In Washington D.C., each spring they have a cherry blossom festival. They have to pick the dates many months in advance. They never know on what dates the cherry blossoms will open. The blossoms do not open on the same date every year. Nature is not that regular. Manna appeared regularly, Sunday through Friday, but not on Saturday. It appeared like this for 40 years.

God provided the manna for them to eat. He provided as much as they needed. He provided it for as long as they needed it. He did so to humble them and teach them to trust in HIM to provide all that they needed, in every situation. When they were without resources, they were to trust in God. When they needed water, they were to trust in God. When enemies came out to meet them in battle, they were to trust in God. When they got sick, they were to trust in God. In every situation they were to trust in God.

That is the lesson that Jesus was learning out in the wilderness. He was also being humbled by this experience. At the start of those 40 days in the dessert Jesus had just come from a peak event in His life.

Luke 3:21-22 (NIV) When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Wow. That was pretty special. I'm sure it made Jesus feel pretty special. It would make us feel special.

In order to prevent Jesus from feeling self-important and self-reliant, the Holy Spirit led Him out into the desert. This was a place of scorpions and snakes, little water or plant life. Here he wrestled in temptation for 40 days. Here, I think He had to wrestle with acceptance of His mission. Here He had to fast and pray and meditate, and be confronted by Satan. The text lists only three temptations. I am sure there were many more that Satan tried in these days.

Finally, Jesus was very hungry, worn down by the days and weeks of inner struggle. Satan points out the rocks that litter the ground in part of that wilderness. They resemble the small, dark brown barley loaves of bread that were common in that day. Satan reminds Jesus that as the Son of God He has power to turn them into actual bread.

Jesus wisely reminds Satan that man's life consists of more than his physical body. We are body and spirit, both. And our spirit feeds on a different kind of food than our bodies do. That is what Jesus tells His disciples on another occasion, when they interrupt Him with physical food.

John 4:34 (NIV) "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me..."

To live successfully this new year you too will need to learn to live by more than physical food. While our physical body must take in physical food to thrive and grow, our spirit requires spiritual food to thrive and grow. Physical food alone will not nourish our spirit.

There is a human spiritual hunger that neither physical food, nor anything else on earth, can satisfy. This spiritual hunger is a hunger in our heart, not in our stomach. This is a hunger for God. We were created by God for relationship to God and we are not satisfied until we know Him and live with Him in righteousness. Jesus spoke of this in His sermon on the mount.

Matthew 5.6 (NIV) "Blessed are those who hunger for righteousness, for they will be filled."

Unbelievers feel that hunger but don't always understand it as a hunger for God. They try to satisfy that hunger with things of the world and it never works.

Christians too may try to satisfy that hunger with things of the world. You who are still young in Jesus may think that simply becoming a Christian will satisfy that hunger, and when it does not, you get discouraged. What you are hungering for is God Himself. It is relationship you

want, not mere status. Your status before God has changed with your conversion, but that is not the same as living with God.

A married couple's status to each other changes when they get married, but feeling loved is not based on the marriage license, the ceremony, or the ring. It is, instead, based on the day to day relating to each other, living life together, getting to know each other, sharing themselves with each other. This is relationship.

Your status with God has changed because of your faith in Jesus, but that is not the same as having your spirit filled with God. Having your spirit satisfied with God comes by feeding on the word of God.

We grow in our relationship with God through God's word.

We get to know God through His word. We find out what He is like in His word. We learn of His promises to us in His word. The Bible is God's communication to us. He is communicating His love for us.

We also communicate ourselves to Him based on His Word. Our lives, our needs form the basis of our communication to God. But we also pray His Words back to Him. His words help us to form our prayers.

When you are in conversation with a friend, part of what you say to the other is in response to what the other has said to you. So our prayers are partly formed by what God has said to us in the Bible.

The Bible is not a history book. The Bible is a love letter. Some people view the Bible as an old history book of people, places, and events. Like history classes in school, the Bible seems to them far removed from the events of their daily lives.

I encourage you to consider the Bible not as a history book, though it contains much history. It is first and foremost the revelation of God to us. It is God communicating Himself to us. The Bible is a love letter to us. Read it as such and it will come alive, because it is from God to you.

What are we to do with God's word? We are to feed upon it. We must feed our spirits on the Word of God.

Don't just study it like a scientist or a historian. Don't just seek facts. Instead seek HIM in its pages. Every page carries truth about God. Some pages show man testing that truth. Some show man ignoring that truth. Some show man verifying that truth. But every page teaches us about God and how to live with Him.

Read the Bible to see what God has revealed about how we are to live with Him. We are to live upon God's word. It is to be eaten. It is to be taken inside a person. God told the Israelites to...

Deuteronomy 11:18 (NIV) "Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds."

That is what we must do also. The Bible is intended to feed the people of God. Physical growth depends upon physical food. Spiritual growth depends upon spiritual food.

In the Bible is the spiritual food we need as we meet God there.

If I need to see my doctor, we meet at his office in Annapolis. If I need my mechanic to work on my truck, I take it to his garage. There is a specific place to meet these people. the place to meet God is in the Bible, His Word. I encourage you to make meeting God in His Word a priority of your days this year. Just as one meal will not last your body all week long, so one meeting with God will not satisfy your spirit for a week.

If you do not regularly meet God through prayer and Bible reading, I encourage you to start. You don't need to wait for a Sunday or a Monday or the beginning of the month, or anything else to align. Just start. You don't wait for a specific day of the week to work on other relationships. Just start.

You can start at the beginning of either testament. You can start in the middle if you know what is going on. Start with any book if you have a general idea of the setting and context of the book. But start.

Invitation

A right relationship with God is built on the knowledge of God's holiness and our sin. Our sin separates us from God like a criminal's crime separates him from society. There is a price to be paid for sin so that we can be forgiven and come into a right relationship with God. God provided the payment for sin by sending His Son, Jesus, to die for us. Sinless Jesus volunteered to die for us. God accepted His death as the penalty for our sins and then raised righteous Jesus from the dead as proof of His acceptance.

Today, if you will believe on Jesus as your Savior, and turn your life over to Him as the Lord of your life, you too can be forgiven of your sins and come into a right relationship with God.

Christian, has God been humbling you lately? Have you learned how much you need Him each day? Meet Him each day in His word, the Bible, and feed your spirit.