

Morning Manna

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, the book of Exodus, Exodus chapter 16.

Exodus chapter 16. I want us to look at the whole passage that we read, but if we read again at verse 11, Exodus 16 and verse 11.

And the Lord said to Moses, 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. 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. Where are we?

[1 : 06] Are we there yet? Why is it taking so long? When will we get there? And you know, there are only some of the questions that our little backseat drivers in our car, that's what they often ask when we're on holiday.

There was actually one day when we had just left on holiday, and we were only two minutes into a three-hour journey down the A9, where there was a voice from the backseat that said, how many minutes until we get there?

How many minutes to go? And you know, you come to a passage like this, and I think, well, I'm sure that Moses heard the same or similar questions from the children of Israel as they journeyed through the wilderness.

Moses, where are we now? Are we there yet? Why is it taking so long? When are we going to get there? And even as we resume our study of the book of Exodus, after what is a three-month break, you might be asking me the same questions.

Myrdo, where are we? Are we there yet? Why is it taking so long? Why do we have to keep going in this study? When are we going to get there? But you know, as I would often say to the boys when they ask that question, when are we going to get there?

[2 : 17] I'd always say, I'm sure you've said it too, we'll get there when we get there. But God willing, we're going to follow the journey of the Israelites all the way to Mount Sinai.

That's where we're going. And that will bring us up to Exodus chapter 20. And there, in Exodus 20, you read that the Lord gave the Ten Commandments. And we'll linger on Mount Sinai for a little while as we study the Ten Commandments.

So that's where we're going. We're going towards Exodus 20 to study the Ten Commandments. But today, in the first half of Exodus chapter 16, I want us to see two things.

There are two things here. There's sorrow and there's sustenance. There's sorrow and there's sustenance. So first of all, we see sorrow. Look at verse 1.

They set out from Elam, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elam and Sinai, on the fifteenth day on the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt.

[3 : 20] And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. 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, the meat pots, and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into the wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

As you're probably aware, this isn't the first time that the Israelites murmured and moaned against their leader, Moses. Neither is this the first time that the Israelites grumbled and groaned against God.

Because if you remember, the Israelites, they had been enslaved in Egypt for 400 years until the Lord rescued them and redeemed them as His people. And in order to ensure that the Israelites

would experience and enjoy freedom from Pharaoh, the king in Egypt, and also experience and enjoy salvation from slavery, you'll remember how the Lord sent plagues and pestilences and pandemics to tell Pharaoh to let my people go.

But it wasn't until the last plague, the plague of death and the Passover, that the Israelites finally made their exodus from Egypt. And at the exodus from Egypt, the Lord promised His people that from their first step out of Egypt until the last step into the promised land, the Lord would go before them as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

The Lord would be with them. He would be with His people. That was the pillar, the symbol of the Lord's promised presence amongst His people. It was a constant and continual reminder and reassurance that the Lord was with His people every step of the way.

[5 : 20] Which, as you know, that is the great hope of the Christian. That from your first step of faith, from that moment you take your first step and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, your first step of faith and commitment to Jesus until your last step in this world, the Lord promises that His presence will go with you every single step of the way.

And the Lord's people can testify to that promise. The promise that He says, I will never leave you and I will never forsake you. I will never leave you and I will never forsake you.

But I want us to use our map. I'm sure you all received a map this morning at the door. I hope you did. As I mentioned to Kenny Murdo, we're going on a treasure hunt.

We're not really. We're just going to follow the map. But as you can see from the map, you see there it's the Exodus route. The Israelites made their Exodus from Egypt. And the journey began when they left the land of Goshen from the city of Ramses in northern Egypt.

And they traveled southeast and they traveled night and day to a place called Succot. But Succot, it wasn't actually a town or a city in Egypt.

[6 : 40] It was where the Israelites first set up camp. It was their first night as sojourners. It was their first campsite, their first night as sojourners in the wilderness.

Because the word Succot, it means tent. So Succot was the first night. That was the place that the Israelites first pitched their Succots, their tents. Then the next day, having taken a slight detour, we see that the Israelites, they traveled down the west side of this large lake called the Bitter Lake. And they came to a place called Pai-Ha-Hiroth. But when the Israelites, they became aware that Pharaoh was pursuing them, he wanted to punish them, he wanted to take them back into Egypt, the Israelites were immediately filled with fear.

But on the banks of the Red Sea, the Lord reassured his people. The Lord once again promised his people. He said, fear not, stand firm and see the salvation that the Lord will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. And the Lord was faithful to his promise. Because as we saw before, just south of the entrance to the Suez Canal, the Red Sea parted.

[7 : 54] And the Israelites, they crossed through the Red Sea on dry ground. And on that day, the Egyptians were drowned and the Israelites were delivered.

Moses, we see, he then led the Israelites southeast along the coast of the Red Sea through the wilderness of Etham. And they traveled for three days and three nights without water.

And their bitter experience of thirst, it became even more bitter when they arrived at Marah.

Because Marah was a bitter place of testing. The water at Marah was bitter.

But when the Lord transformed Marah to Mataph from bitter to sweet, he reminded and reassured his people. You see it in the previous chapter. He reminded them, saying, I am Jehovah Rapha. I am the Lord, your healer. I am Jehovah Rapha, the Lord, your healer. Then the Israelites, they continued a few miles further to the place called Elam.

[8 : 58] And in comparison to Marah, which was a bitter place, Elam was a place of bountiful provision. It was a bountiful provision of rest and refreshment.

And so the children of Israel by this point, they're in Elam. They're just leaving Elam. And they're refreshed. They're rested. They're good to go. And then we read verse 1 of chapter 16.

They set out from Elam, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elam and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt.

And what we see there is that it's now exactly one month. It's one month since the Israelites left Egypt. It's one month since the Exodus.

Because it was on the fifteenth day of the first month that the Passover and the plague of death took place in Egypt. And now one month exactly.

[10:00] One month on, on the fifteenth day of the second month, we're told, the Israelites, they're leaving Elam. They're continuing southeast along the coast of the Sinai Peninsula.

But you know, what's remarkable is that by this point in their wilderness journey, all the experts, they claim that the Israelites had not only been walking for a month or weeks on end, they'd covered or they'd walked a distance of nearly 600 kilometers, which is 370 miles.

If you wanted a modern equivalent, it's the distance from Inverness to Manchester. It's the distance from Inverness to Manchester. Imagine walking that far.

It's a long way. But the Israelites, as we see at this point from the map, they're nowhere near the promised land yet. They have walked 370 miles.

They've been going for a month. And they're nowhere near the promised land yet. And as you can imagine, a month into the journey, all that excitement, all that enthusiasm that had been there at the start, it's now started to fade.

[11:12] It's now started to fizzle out. They're beginning to be worn out. They're even beginning to worry. They'd already encountered and experienced a struggle for water in the wilderness of Ethan.

And now they're in the wilderness of Sin. And food is scarce. And with nearly 3 million mouths to feed, that's how many people were there.

We always have to keep that in mind. It's about 3 million people. And there's 3 million mouths to feed. There's no crops because they're moving all the time. There's no income because nobody's working.

And so in the minds of these Israelites, this was fast becoming a humanitarian crisis. They've struggled for water. Now they're struggling for food. And these Israelite refugees, they think, this is a crisis.

This is going to be a humanitarian crisis of 3 million people. And, you know, as we've seen it in our own day, we've seen how things can escalate and become exacerbated because of conflict or because of crisis.

[12:15] We see it today in places like Ukraine. We see it in Yemen. We see it in places like Sudan and Syria and Somalia. Places affected by war and struggling for the basic necessities of life.

For food and water, clothing and medicine. In fact, I was reading the other day that according to the IRC, which is the International Rescue Committee, they say that it's estimated that in 2022, there are record numbers of people fleeing political chaos or persecution.

And it's estimated that there are over 100 million refugees in the world. People who have been displaced and dispersed throughout the world because of conflict or crisis.

And as we often see it on the news, we only see pictures. We only see some of it, a snapshot of it. And what we see, we see these awful situations, which only bring sorrow upon sorrow.

And that's the situation the Israelites were facing. They were facing a situation of sorrow upon sorrow. They were wondering what the future held for them. And even when we look at these images on the news, we see you feel so helpless.

[13:39] You're heartbroken for them. We feel absolutely helpless. And that's how the Israelites felt. Completely helpless. They were out in a wilderness. And they were wondering what's going to happen next.

But for the Israelites, we see that their sorrow, in the midst of their sorrow, the Lord provided sustenance. The Lord provided sustenance. That's what we see secondly.

So sorrow and sustenance. Look at verse 2. And the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.

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 the wilderness, into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

So as the Israelites struggled, and they stressed about where their next meal was going to come from, they murmured and moaned against Moses, as they always did. Then they started groaning and grumbling against God.

[14:42] And yet what we read in the narrative is that the Lord provided or promised Moses, first of all, that he would provide a daily provision for the people of Israel.

But we're told that this provision was to be a test of faith. The daily provision was to be a test of faith and obedience. It was to be a test in order to teach the Israelites about devotion and dependence upon the Lord.

That's what we read in verse 4. Then the Lord said to Moses, Behold, I'm 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.

And you know, my friend, that's what the Lord often does with his people, isn't it? He tests us in order to teach us. The Lord tests us in order to teach us.

He tests us to encourage and enable us to grow in godliness. He tests us so that we might possess and practice a Christ-like character, conduct, and conversation.

[15:53] He tests us that we might look to the Lord and lean upon the Lord. He tests us so that we might discover the importance of devotion to the Lord and dependence upon the Lord.

The Lord tests us in order to teach us to trust Him. The Lord tests us to teach us to trust Him. And sometimes the Lord tests us through the most painful of providences.

Sometimes He tests us through the most darkest of difficulties. Sometimes He tests us through the most sorrowful of circumstances. But you know, my friend, in all our testing, the Lord is teaching us. He's teaching us Proverbs 3, 5, and 6. In all our testing, the Lord is teaching us Proverbs 3, 5, and 6. He's teaching us, And as I said before, I know that that's easier for me to say than it is for you to live through it.

But Scripture reminds us that the Lord tests us in order to teach us to trust Him. But as we've seen already, this wasn't the first time that the Israelites were tested.

[17:23] In the previous chapter, chapter 15, Marah was a place of bitter testing. And now here in the wilderness of sin, they're being tested again. Which shows us, or ought to show us, that the Christian life, the Christian life isn't all about singing songs of salvation.

Because sometimes the Christian life, sometimes it's a struggle. It's a struggle in the wilderness of sin. Sometimes the Christian life is a struggle in the wilderness of sin.

Yes, there are mountaintop moments. Yes, there are great times of triumph, where we feel the Lord close to us, and we experience the Lord's blessing in our life. But there are also times in our experience, when the Lord leads us into the valley of testing.

And as you know, my friend, maybe only too well, it's in the valley of testing that we're taught to trust the Lord. It's in the valley of testing that we learn to look and lean upon the Lord.

It's in the valley of testing that we discover the importance, as it is here, the importance of devotion to the Lord, and dependence upon the Lord. And that's the lesson the Israelites are going to learn in the wilderness of sin.

[18:30] They're going to learn about the importance of devotion to the Lord, and dependence upon the Lord. And it's all about their daily bread.

It's all based upon their daily bread. They were going to learn what we were praying earlier with the children. They were going to learn the Lord's Prayer. Give us today our daily bread.

Give us this day our daily bread. But, you know, I often wonder, even with that petition in the Lord's Prayer, give us this day our daily bread, is that petition really relevant for us in the 21st century?

Because many of us, we don't live a hand-to-mouth existence. Thankfully, many of us don't. We have an abundance of possessions. We have an abundance of provisions.

Our daily bread is already in the supermarket, or it's already in our freezer and our fridge. Of course, there was a day when that was relevant, more relevant, the previous generation.

[19:37] We think of our parents and grandparents before us. That's Reverend William MacLeod along the road here in Barvis. He always says, when the cupboards were empty, the churches were full.

But now that the cupboards are full, the churches are empty. And yet, we look at what's going on today, even in the past few months, the financial squeeze, the cost of living rising rapidly.

We don't know when it's going to stop or how it's going to stop. And we see more and more people using food banks. Maybe the petition, give us this day our daily bread, is actually more relevant than we think.

The Israelites certainly discovered that. They learned the importance of devotion to the Lord and dependence upon the Lord. Because for the next 40 years, every day for the next 40 years, the Lord was going to provide their portion.

In the evening, which was the beginning of the Jewish day, it went evening to evening. In the evening, the Lord provided the feathered pheasant quail.

[20 : 47] And in comparison to chicken, I was looking it up, in comparison to chicken, quail is high in vitamin A, C, and also in iron. So it's good for you. It's full of nutrition, full of nourishment.

I've never tried it. Maybe you've tried it. I remember a few years ago, it was on the menu in the Crown Hotel. They were selling quail. And my brother-in-law had it. And yet, for us who probably have a varied diet or a varied palate, the quail, for the Israelites, it was on the menu for dinner every night of the week for 40 years.

Quail was on the menu for dinner every night of the week for 40 years. I doubt that the Israelites ever mixed it up with roast quail and quail pie and quail burgers and quail curry.

The menu was quail for dinner. And then fine flakes of frost for breakfast. And as we read, the Israelites, and as we said to the children, the Israelites didn't really know what these fine flakes of frost were.

In my mind, I immediately went to Frosties when I read fine flakes of frost. But we're told later in the chapter, we'll read it, God willing, next Lord's Day, that it looked like white coriander seeds and they tasted like wafers made with honey.

[22 : 07] But this fine flakes of frost, they were so unusual and so unknown to them that they called it manna. They saw it in the morning and they said, well, manna, what is it?

What is it? But as Moses said to them, it is the bread that the Lord gives you to eat. It is the bread that the Lord gives you to eat.

They were asking, what is it? And Moses said, it is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat. But you know what I love about the Lord's sustaining sustenance through the wilderness journey is that we're told in verses 7 and 8 that the evening quail was to remind the Israelites that it was the Lord who redeemed them from Egypt.

But the morning manna, the morning manna was to reveal the glory of the Lord to them. The morning manna was to reveal the glory of the Lord to them.

At evening, he says, at evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out to the land of Egypt. And in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord. And you know, I can't help but think of what Jesus said about this provision in John chapter 6.

[23 : 25] Because in John 6, Jesus, you'll remember, he provided a provision for a large number of people. Jesus fed the 5,000 with five loaves and two fish.

He fed the 5,000. And when you read through John 6, you read that the following day the crowds want another sign. Feeding the 5,000 wasn't enough. They want another sign from Jesus.

And they ask Jesus, what sign do you do that we may see and believe you? But Jesus says to the crowds, our fathers ate manna in the wilderness.

As it is written in Exodus 16, he gave them bread from heaven to eat. In other words, Jesus was saying that the Lord revealed his glory in the wilderness through the perfect provision of morning manna.

But, says Jesus, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God who comes down from heaven gives life to the world.

[24 : 27] And then when the crowd heard this, when the crowd heard that Jesus has provided, or God has provided, bread for the world, they said, Sir, give us this bread always.

Give us this bread always. And how does Jesus respond? He makes that powerful proclamation. I am the bread of life.

Whosoever comes to me shall not hunger. And whosoever believes in me shall never thirst. So Jesus emphasized and he explained that he's the true bread from heaven.

He's the perfect provision of sustenance and salvation. I am the bread of life. Whosoever believes in me shall not hunger.

And whosoever comes to me shall never thirst. And so what we ought to see in the, as we begin, restart this study and see in this passage, what we ought to see is that this morning manna in the wilderness, it's always presenting to us Jesus.

[25 : 30] It's a foretaste and a foreshadowing of Jesus, the bread of life. Because the morning manna, as we read in verse 8, the morning manna was to reveal the glory of the Lord.

The morning manna was to reveal the glory of the Lord. And that's what John says in his gospel. He says that when the word became flesh, we beheld his glory.

We saw the glory of the Lord. He was the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. And don't you find it remarkable that when the word became flesh, when God became man, when Jesus arrived on the scene in the story of salvation, when the Lord revealed his glory at the incarnation, where was Jesus, the bread of life, born?

Where was Jesus, the bread of life, born? He was born in Bethlehem. If we asked all the children, they would tell us he was born in Bethlehem. The bread of heaven.

He humbled himself from the crown of glory to the cradle in Bethlehem. The house of bread. That's what the name Bethlehem means.

[26 : 44] It means house of bread. And don't you just love how the Bible pulls everything together? And it's all linked together. It's one beautiful story that Jesus, the bread of life, that came down from heaven, he was born in Bethlehem, the house of bread, in order to provide for you the perfect and plentiful provision of sustenance and salvation.

That's the wonder of the gospel. Jesus, the bread of life, has come down to provide for you sustenance. And salvation.

But you know, if you were to read John chapter 6 this morning, you'd also read that when Jesus made all these statements about being sustenance and salvation, there were many who grumbled when they heard what Jesus had to say.

They grumbled and groaned about what Jesus said when he said he's the bread of heaven and the bread of life. But Jesus said to them, all the grumblers, all the groaners, he said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, be certain of this, he was saying.

Be sure of this. Whosoever believes has eternal life. So whosoever believes, I am the bread of life and I am the bread of heaven, has eternal life. Your fathers, says Jesus, your fathers, those in Exodus 16, they ate manna in the wilderness and they died.

[28 : 16] But this bread that comes down from heaven has come down so that you may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.

And you know, Jesus, he couldn't be clearer. He couldn't be clearer to us this morning because he's emphasizing and explaining that he's the one, he's the only one who came to be that perfect and plentiful provision of sustenance and satisfaction and salvation for your soul.

You know, it's no wonder that we'll sing it in a moment. It's no wonder that the psalmist, he exhorts us and he encourages all of us this morning to what? He says, oh, taste and see that God is good who trusts in him is blessed.

Oh, taste and see that God is good who trusts in him is blessed. And you know, it's just like eating food, isn't it? You know, I could describe these Frosties to you and say they're wonderful, but unless you take it yourself, you'll never know.

And it's the same with the gospel. I can describe to you and I do describe to you, I try to describe to you every Lord's Day how wonderful this message is. But unless you come to it yourself, unless you taste and see for yourself, you'll never know how good it really is.

[29 : 45] So unless you come to this Jesus, you'll never know that he is the bread of life. You'll never understand and experience this life-giving bread that Jesus promises to be for you.

So, as the psalmist says, taste and see that God is good who trusts in him is blessed. My friend, Jesus is your morning manna.

He's your breadwinner. He's your bread from heaven. And he's saying to you this morning in the gospel, I am the bread of life. Whosoever comes to me shall not hunger.

And whosoever believes in me shall never thirst. So there's your invitation. You're invited to come to Jesus, the bread of life.

Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee for thy word, thy word that is living and active, thy word that presents to us Jesus as the bread of life, one in whom we must come to and taste and see that he is good and trust in him and be blessed.

[31 : 00] Lord, remember us as we begin or resume this study in the book of Exodus. And as we follow in the footsteps of the Israelites, we pray that we would learn from their experience, that we would learn that how they were tested by the Lord in order to teach them, to trust him, to be devoted to him.

And Lord, we pray that we would apply it to our lives and see that the Lord is with us, that the Lord of hosts, as the psalmist says, is upon our side. He doth constantly remain.

Lord, watch over us then, we pray. Bless thy truth to us, we ask, and go before us, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning. We're going to sing in Psalm 34. Psalm 34 in the Scottish Psalter, page 247. Psalm 34.

We're singing from verse 5 down to the verse mark 10. Psalm 34, page 247, singing in verse 5.

[32 : 10] They looked to him, and lightened were, not shamed were their faces. This poor man cried, God heard and saved him from all his distresses. The angel of the Lord encamps, and round encompasseth all those about that do him fear, and them delivereth.

Oh, taste and see that God is good, who trusts in him is blessed. Fear God, his saints, and on that him fear shall be with want oppressed. The lion's young may hungry be, and they may lack their food, but they that truly seek the Lord shall not lack any good.

So we'll sing these verses of Psalm 34 to God's praise. Psalm 34 just and made a hint of shame.

They looked to him, non-lighted where no shame than were their faces.

This poor, one light forward, The Lord has saved him from all his distresses.

The angel of the Lord has come. All those of our glad to have fear, All them delivereth.

[33 : 59] O taste I see thy goddess good, Who trust in him is blessed.

Fear, goddess, saints, And let him fear shall be with want pro-blessed.

The lions young may hungry be, And they may have their food, But they that truly seek, The Lord shall not like any good.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, The love of God the Father, And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.