

Intro: India... Great team... Great experience. Learned their strategy. Drank deeply of the culture for a week. More chai breaks than you would imagine! Rode an elephant in Ujjain... We learned much...

One of the most memorable experiences, was when we got in the taxi and headed to the hotel from the airport. The poverty was breathtaking. It slapped us in the face... Physical need... Great! Spiritual need... Greater!

God cares about both. That's why Jesus was mighty in word and deed and we should be too... But God is most concerned with meeting our spiritual needs, which are our eternal needs. God is the God who provides everything we need.

"The True & Greater Provision" **Exodus 16**

Context: You remember from last week how the first 15 chapters of Exodus detail the story of God's work of redemption in bringing Israel out of slavery and oppression in Egypt through the plagues and Passover. The Israelites now find themselves on a journey through the wilderness to the promised land, and they are sure to face some challenges on along the way. That is where we pick up in Exodus 16.

Read Exodus 16:1-3

Did you see what is going on here? The Israelites have been in the wilderness a short time, and they start to grumble! I'm sure you never grumble or complain, but just in case I want to give you a few truths we see from the text about the sin of grumbling.

- 1) **Grumbling is a sin.** Children at the dinner table. Adults at work. "Do everything without grumbling." (Phil. 2:14)
- 2) **The sin behind the sin of grumbling is discontentment.** If we look closely, we find that all of our sinful actions (be they thoughts, attitudes, words, conduct) have another sin at work in our hearts driving that action. We can call this the sin under the sin, or the sin behind the sin. One sin is driving another sin. So with the sin of grumbling, we find we grumble, because we are dissatisfied with the current state of things, and when we grumble, our hearts are exposed before God. Principle of inescapable influence...
- 3) **We have an uncanny ability to quickly disregard the work of God.** How quickly do our songs of praise degenerate into discontent before God! Exodus 15:1-21 is song of praise. In the next three verses and into this chapter, we find the people of God grumbling.
 - a. I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed . . . The Lord is my strength and my song and he has become my salvation. God you are great. Jamisicki. . .
 - b. God I'm not sure you are strong; I'm not sure you are great.
 - c. How quickly do we forget the works of God when we grumble and move from faith to unbelief!
 - d. Even though we can't see it at the time, our grumbling is oftentimes irrational. "Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in Egypt..."
 - e. Is there anything you are grumbling about in your life right now? Let's deal with it, because...
- 4) **When we grumble, we are really grumbling against the Lord.** He is the one who has sovereignly allowed these things in our life.
 - a. Look at verse 8.
 - b. The Israelites should have known they were grumbling against the Lord. It was the Lord who had just miraculously led them out of Egypt. They had just experienced the incredible redemption of God. God rescued them out of slavery and oppression, and they grumbled against him.

T: How would God respond? In spite of their grumbling, God, in his grace, offers his spectacular provision. This brings us to our first truth. We should . . .

I. Recognize God's gracious provision in spite of our grumbling (Exodus 16).

Read 4-36

God promises his provision. (What)

- Look at verse 4.
- "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, . . ."
- God rains down bread from heaven. What a picture...!
- Verse 31 describes this bread. Manna – miraculous provision from God. . .
- This manna is called "the food of angels" (Ps. 78:24) and spiritual food (1 Cor. 10:3 – ref.).

- In verse 16 the Lord gave the Israelites specific instructions about collecting and eating the manna. They were to only gather what they could eat for that day. Moses tells them to collect an omer each day, which is about two liters. He also tells them not and not keep any for the next day. If they did so, it would rot, stink, and produce worms.
- He also instructed them to collect more on the sixth day in preparation for the Sabbath. On the sixth day they had a double portion of provision.
- So God says, "Enjoy the manna each day. Enjoy the quail. Observe the Sabbath for rest and worship."

But God provides in this specific way for a specific purpose. (Why)

- "that I may test them, [and what is the test?] whether they will walk in my law or not."
- God provided the manna in this way in order to test their faith and obedience. He wants us to see if we are eager to follow his word.
- God would provide, but they had to receive his provision through following his commands. So often we want his provision, but far too often we want to bypass his will/commands in the process.
- "Here I am Lord, drop in my lap." "Yoo hoo, over here God, how about a little wisdom? how about a little grace?" But we are not willing to lift a finger to seek it. Christianity is a faith that requires action.
- The Israelites were told to walk in obedience to God's commands in order to receive his blessings.

Notice how God provides (How)

- God also desires to build our faith. I believe this is why he gives them just enough for each day.
- Verse 18... God's provision is always sufficient.
- God supplies for our needs in a way that will test our faith to reveal what it is in our hearts.
- Just like exams in school reveal what we know, opportunities to trust God reveal what is in our hearts.
- When you need any provision from God to walk through a trial, to serve him, to obey his commands, know that God's grace is sufficient, but also know he typically distributes his grace on a daily and sometimes hourly basis.
- Many of them passed the test. Others failed. Some chose to try to preserve the bread, probably for fear of hunger, probably fearing God might take a day off. God takes no days off! What he says, he will do.

Second Reason Why does God provide?

- The end of verse 12 tells us: "Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God."
- This provision is so important that God tells them to place a jar in the ark, that they might remember for generations to come. It was to teach future generations of how God provides. It was to serve as a witness to the faithfulness of God.

T: The provision of God here in Exodus 16 points us to God's greater provision. As we turn to John 6, I want to invite you to . . .

II. Feast on God's True and Greater Provision through the gift of Christ (John 6:22-69)

Jesus offers us a feast, so as we work through these verses, I want you to conProvision of God . . . Some of us approach Christianity like ____ "a little dab will do."

John 6:22-32

- Context: Feed 5,000, crossed to the other side of the sea by walking on water, people find him...
- The crowds followed because they wanted more material provision/blessing. *Look at 25-27.*
- This is hard... People see their immediate physical needs but don't always see their spiritual needs.
- We tried to explain this several times last week as we moved from house to house throughout the week, laying hands on people, asking God to heal physical needs while also explaining that all of our physical brokenness points to a deeper spiritual brokenness that Jesus died to heal.
- But we have to see our need. That's why Jesus says, "Work for the food that never perishes."
- The crowd didn't. That's why they were demanding a sign. They say in verses 30-31: "Then what sign do you do that we may see and believe you? What word do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness: as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

- And listen to what Jesus says in verse 32: "Truly, truly [these are important words...] 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. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world."
- They're naturally interested in that... "Sir, give us this bread always."
- Jesus replies in verse 35: **"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."**

- The sign of feeding 5,000 was meant to point to something greater!!! Just like the Passover, and the same is true for the manna in the wilderness. That bread was to point to the true and greater bread, Jesus Christ.
- Everyone who hears the message of Christ has the opportunity to receive the true manna. And when we do, we find true satisfaction... we will never hunger or thirst again!

All of this comes through Jesus' work on the cross! (*Read vv. 47-51*)

Let me give you two, super practical ways to feast on Christ.

1) Feast on the words of Jesus daily.

- In Deuteronomy 8:3, we find further commentary from Moses on God's purposes in testing the Israelites in the wilderness with manna. **"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." (Deuteronomy 8:3; cf. Matthew 4:4)**
- Do you see that? The wilderness provision was not primarily about hungry mouths to feed. It was about teaching them to depend on the word of God and keep his commands.
- We see this verse quoted by Jesus in his confrontation with Satan. We live on the words of God! They are our life. They provide strength and sustenance.
- Do you see the implications? I'm going to be really straight here. Without them we are dying!

- Now, to live on every word that comes from the mouth of God does not mean simply knowing what the words say. It's not simply reading them, understanding them, or even being able to memorize them. Satan was pretty good at that.
- It means we know them AND we earnestly seek to do what they say. We put them into practice. We obey. It is not enough to know the Word. It's not enough.
 - **"If you love me, you will keep my commandments." (John 14:15)**
- I love "The Parable of the Two Sons" found in Matthew 21. There Jesus says . . .
- **"What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went. And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you." (Matthew 21:28-31)**
- The first son was obstinate at first, apparently far from the Father's love, but changed his mind and performed the will of the Father.
- The other son knew the command, said he would do it, but never moved. There was no obedience!
- Sometimes I fear that we American Christians, are so smart, so rational, so well-read, we can cite all the chapter and verses, yeah, Lord I got that, no problem, but at the end of the day, we're not really giving ourselves, dying to ourselves, that we might 'obey everything God has commanded us.'
- This is what Jesus said, right? "teach them to obey everything I've commanded."
- We grow in our faith by keeping his word. If you want to grow in Christ, keep Christ's commands. It's as simple as that.
- If your faith is stagnant, it may be because your obedience has been stagnant.

T: Which leads us to our second practical way to feast on Christ . . .

2) Feast by engaging in the mission of Jesus daily.

Did you know that participating in the mission of God is one of the greatest ways you can feast on Christ?

- One more story – John 4... This is a good one. Can't tell the whole thing. . . .
- John 4:32 "I have food to eat that you do not know about." What is he talking about!?!)
- **"My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. [And what is his work?] Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest? Look, I tell you, you up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.'" (John 4:34-35)**
- The work of Christ is gathering people into his eternal kingdom through faith in him. This work drove him. It gave him strength and unexplainable energy.
- We should take our cues from Jesus, right? After all, we are Christians.
- When we talk about joining the family and joining the mission at Redemption Hill, we are inviting you and all people to join the family and mission of Jesus. It's all his. Our church is nothing apart from him.

In India: they have a very simple strategy based on the great commission called the four fields. Field 1 involves preparing the field through prayer. Field 2 is where we sow seed in the field through telling others the good news. Field 3 involves helping new disciples grow in Christ, and field 4 gathers these new disciples into new churches, and then the process starts all over. Here's what I love.

- They believe the Great Commission is for every Christian as soon as a person becomes a Christian. No one is exempt. If you are a disciple of Christ, the mission of Christ is for you: "teach them to obey everything." Make disciples and baptize. . .

- How? Pray. Make this a regular part of your prayer life if it's not already. Pray for opportunities. Pray for boldness. Pray for wisdom. Pray for strength to obey. But add to your prayers the encouragement of your brothers and sisters in Christ. Don't do this alone!
- Scott and I went to India together. The brothers there try to go out two by two like Jesus' disciples.
- There is no greater mission than engaging in the mission of God, and there is something incredibly invigorating, life-giving when we join God in his mission!

Conclusion:

- One of the missionaries we spent most of our time with was a broken record during our trainings. As we had taught and trained the national pastors and church planters, he continually asked:
- **What's God's vision?** And everyone would respond "Harek jhati, harek kuhl, harek basha, harek log"
- **"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation [harek jhati], from all tribes [harek kuhl] and peoples [harek basha] and languages harek log], standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" (Revelation 7:9-10)**
- All peoples worshiping God! If this is God's vision, it must be the vision of our lives and the vision of this church.

THE POINT: Feast on Jesus as the true, eternally satisfying bread from heaven by faith.

Feast on him by keeping his Word. Feast on him by fulfilling his mission! There is nothing more satisfying in the world than this.