

Exodus 16:2-15

One of the most remarkable foods found in the Bible is something called **manna**. It first appeared on Israel's journey through the **wilderness** shortly after they had been delivered out of their slavery in **Egypt**. Manna is described in the Bible as tiny **flakes** - little **wafers** that tasted sweet, like **honey**. It would appear in the **morning** with the dew, and when the **sun** came up, it **melted**. Manna gets its **name** from the Hebrew words which the people spoke when they first **saw** it on the ground. They said, "Ma-na - What is it?" They didn't know what it **was**, because this was food which they had never **seen** before. In fact, this was food which had never **existed** before. God created it specifically for the Children of **Israel** during the time of their **journey** in the wilderness.

This morning we're going to find out that **manna** can teach us a few **lessons** - lessons which are very **appropriate** for our time. Today we hear about crises like oil shortages, water shortages, job losses, and dwindling investment returns. Politicians who are hoping to be reelected scramble to provide **answers** to these problems. As we look at the issues of **today's** world, maybe that tiny little flake called **manna** can **teach** us a few things - things like: Our **God** is in **control** - our God **loves** us - and in His **grace**, our God **provides** for **all** our needs. Let's take a closer look at **Manna's Many Lessons**.

In our text for today, the Children of Israel were about a **month and a half** into their journey to the Promised Land, and the food which they had brought along with them from Egypt had **run out**. So, the people **grumbled** against their **leaders**, Moses and Aaron. They said, "*If only we had **died** by the Lord's hand in the land of **Egypt**, when we sat around pots of meat and ate **as much food as we wanted**, but now you have brought us out into this **wilderness** to have this whole community **die of hunger**.*" I guess their short-term memory wasn't very good. They seem to have forgotten that when they were in Egypt they were **slaves** - and they had bitterly **complained** about it.

Their grumbling also shows the **weakness** of their **faith**. It wasn't **Moses** and **Aaron** who had led them out of Egypt - it was the **LORD**. By His mighty arm **God** had **destroyed** the pursuing Egyptian army, and had led the Israelites through the Red Sea **on dry ground**. Did they really think that He couldn't provide **food** for them as well?

God would have been perfectly justified to **rail** against them for their **grumbling**, and their lack of **faith**. But instead, God responded with **love**. He told Moses, “*Watch what I will do. I will **rain down bread from heaven** for you.*” So, Moses - through his brother **Aaron** - **relayed** that message to the Israelites. He said, “*At **evening** you will know that it was the **LORD** who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the **morning** you will see the **Glory of the LORD**, because he has heard your constant **grumbling** against the LORD. Who are **we** that you should grumble against **us**?*”

Then in verse 10 we’re told, “*As Aaron spoke to the entire Israelite community, they turned toward the wilderness, and suddenly the **Glory of the Lord appeared** in the cloud.*” This was a physical appearance of **God Himself** - the **same** God who had promised to send their forefathers a **Savior** who would provide the whole **world** with the **forgiveness of sins** - the same God who had **delivered** them out of their **slavery** in Egypt. God was showing them that **He** is in **control**.

That evening **quail** showed up, and **covered** the camp. This was the **meat** which God had promised them. In the morning the **manna** appeared on the floor of the desert. This was the **bread** which God had promised them. There was no **question** about what was **happening**. The **quail** didn’t just appear **by chance**, and the **ground** didn’t produce the manna. These blessings came from **God**. What the Israelites **didn’t** know at that time was that this manna would **continue** to be there for them for the entire 40 years which they would spend in the wilderness. And then when they entered into the Promised Land, it would **stop** - never to be seen again. This blessing of **manna** was God’s way of teaching Israel that **He** was the one who had delivered them from their slavery in **Egypt** - that **He** was the one who was **leading** them through the wilderness - and that **He** was the one who was providing **food** for their bodies. And God was **doing** all of these things in spite of **their sins** because He **loved** them. The manna was teaching the Israelites to look to **God** with thanksgiving **every day**, as they received their daily bread, and to **thank** Him for His **goodness**.

That same gracious Lord also supplies **us** with **our** daily bread. Grace is described as God’s **undeserved** love for sinners. None of us **deserve** the daily bread which we **receive**. We’re just like the **Israelites**. We **complain** - we **compare** what we have with what **others** have (or with what we had in the **past**) - and we conveniently **forget** so many of the blessings that we

continue to receive each and every day. Every morning we have food in our **cupboards** and **refrigerators**. **Why?** It's because of God's **grace** to us in His **Son**, Jesus Christ. As we live our lives here on the earth, the Lord provides for **all** of our needs, and He **does** so purely out of His **goodness** and **mercy**. Manna teaches us that **everything** we have - our homes, our jobs and income, our clothing and food - every necessity of life comes from our gracious heavenly Father through our **Savior** Jesus Christ. And He will **continue** to provide for our needs **throughout** this earthly life, because we have His **promise**: *"God will fully supply your every need, according to his glorious riches in **Christ Jesus**."*

But best of all, the **manna** which God sent to Israel from **heaven**, was a **picture** of the Lord Jesus **Himself**. Jesus told the people of His day, *"My Father gives you the **real** bread from heaven. For the bread of **God** is the one who **comes down** from heaven and **gives life** to the world ... **I am the bread of life**. Your fathers ate **manna** in the wilderness, and they **died**. **This** is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that anyone may eat it and **not die**. **I am the living bread** which came down from heaven. If anyone eats **this** bread, he will live **forever**. The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my **flesh**."* Jesus was **sent** to us from **heaven**. And Jesus freely offered His sinless life as a sacrifice on the cross, to provide **eternal life** for the world. There is **more** to life than just **living** and **dying**, because with the **forgiveness** which Jesus has earned **for** us and given **to** us, we will live **beyond** this world. Jesus is the manna from **heaven** who gives us **eternal** life.

But God's gift of manna was meant to do **more** than just fill the hungry **stomachs** of His people as they journeyed through the wilderness. God also wanted to strengthen their **trust** in Him **each and every day**, so He provided manna in a way that would **test** them, to see if they would **obey** Him. It's interesting that each morning they would be able to gather as much as they needed **for that day**. But if they tried to **keep** some of the manna until the **next** day, it would **rot**. He also told them to gather **twice as much** manna on **Friday**, so they would have enough food for the **Sabbath**. And on **that** day, it **didn't** rot. On the **Sabbath** day they were to focus on **God's** **promise** that He would send a **Savior** to them - a Savior who would bring forgiveness for the **world**, and who would provide His people with **eternal** rest in **heaven**.

It's also important for **us** to **trust** that the Lord will give us the things we need **each day**. That's why Jesus taught us to pray, "*Give us **this day** our daily bread.*" We are to live **one day** at a time. And as we **do** that, God also enables us to focus our thoughts on the **eternal** rest which Jesus has provided for us. Jesus Himself said, "*Seek first the kingdom of **God** and his **righteousness**, and all these **things** will be given to you as well.*" We can find **rest** in the knowledge that our sins have all been **forgiven**. And we can find **peace** in knowing the door to heaven is **wide open** for us. Through God's Word and Sacraments, He gives us **everything** we need for body and soul. He satisfies our hunger for **righteousness**, He enables us to be **content** with what He has given, He fills us with the **peace** of knowing that God has **earned** and **provided** our eternal salvation, and He stirs up a **longing** in us to experience the joys of **heaven**.

May we set our hearts on God's kingdom, and may we arrange our weekly schedules around **hearing** God's Word and **worshiping** Him, because **Manna's Many Lessons** remind us that, "*All depends on our possessing God's abundant **grace** and **blessing**.*" As we make **Jesus** and His **salvation** the **first** and **most important** meal of our week, God will see to it that we will also have **everything we need** for our daily lives. Amen.