

August 1, 2021

“Just for Today”

Scripture Readings

Exodus 16:2-4

The whole congregation of the Israelites set out from Elim; and Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.” Then the Lord said to Moses, “I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day.

John 6: 24-35

So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.” Then they said to him, “What must we do to perform the works of God?”

Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” So they said to him, “What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” Then Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Sermon

“Just for Today”

There aren't two better scriptures to depict one of the sorriest aspects of humanity, whininess. First the Israelites whine, “we were better off as slaves than this, Moses. Why did you drag us all the way out here just to let us die in the desert.” Then the disciples whine, “What are you gonna do for us Jesus? Show us one of your tricks? We want manna like Moses gave his people, manna, manna, manna!”

Now I am all for expressing feelings, it's important to get things off your chest. It is important to say out loud that we are grieving or hurting and even annoyed. It is also important we don't label other people's feelings as whining just because we don't like what they are saying, but what we hear in the scriptures that is for real whining.

Now you all know I'm pretty tough, veteran, strong stock, but last weekend my air conditioner went out. On Monday when people asked me how my weekend was, I whined, “my air conditioner went out, we were hot, really hot.” I came from farmers and ranchers that made it through the dust bowl in Oklahoma, but I was like, “call the emergency number honey, cuz this is an emergency. I'm melting, look at my hair!” My point is that part of being human is to be self centered, selfish, wanting what we want, when we want it.

But when we get dissatisfied, overwhelmed, we don't have to stay there, or go backward, we don't have to let our disappointment overtake us. We don't have to make those around us miserable with our whining, and we don't have to blame anybody like the Israelites blamed Moses and God.

We can actually turn to God instead, the bread of life, and be fulfilled no matter what is going on, no matter what we lack. Now I cringe a little when I hear scriptures like this, because it's great that God feeds us spiritually but people also have to eat real food too and there is a whole lot of hunger still in our world that needs to be addressed. But Jesus is not saying that people don't have to eat, he is just trying, one more time, to help us mere mortals to understand who God is. He tries so hard, in so many different ways to explain God to us, think about it.

'God is the bread of life, God is the living well, God is like the shepherd that comes after you when you are lost, God is like the father that throws a banquet when his wayward son comes crawling back home penniless. God is like the good Samaritan that picks us up out of the ditch, God is like the boss that pays you even when you show up late for work.' On and on, Jesus does his best to help us to comprehend even a little the boundless love and infinite grace of God.

So in that case I think, when we start whining like the disciples and Israelites maybe we can stop asking what God can and should do for us but what can we do for God. I've said this before, when we ask that question we take the focus off of ourselves and put it back on God, doing God's work, continuing Christ mission, fulfilling his vision where all the sheep are fed, watered and loved, no one excluded or left behind. When we do that, when we help others, we too are fed and lifted up and out of the morass that life can often pitch us into head first.

Another theme emerges when you look at these two whine-fests side by side. It is that we are to try and live our life just for today. God will be there for you tomorrow so just take what you need for the next 24 hours.

It's no secret that "Just for today" is one of the key components to recovery from anything. If we can do that, live in the present then we aren't regretting the past or fearing tomorrow. Whether addiction, trauma, depression, overcoming just about anything physical or emotional just do what you need to do today. But it can also help you with getting through exams at school, completing a big project, having the courage to ask for a raise.

Like Moses told his people, just gather enough for today. Just gather enough courage, or strength or whatever you need. When we take action, then we aren't just stuck in the desert, running around in circles complaining right?

Some days we have to really break it down. Make a list and take it one thing at a time and every one of those lists could start with. Ask for God's help, with whatever you need and at the end of the night, the last thing on the list could be "Thank God for getting you through another day... another day of grief, another day without a drink or smoke, or simple stuff like, thank you God for helping me to do what I needed to do to take care of myself, thank you God for the energy to exercise today, to go for a walk, to send a card to a friend.

Invite God into your struggles. Strength and courage will follow and sustain you with the bread of life. I don't know about you but when I feel sustained, I am less likely to complain. May we all feel fed by the spirit of the living God, the bread of life. AMEN



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REV. SUSAN DRAKE



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