

# Manna in the Wilderness

September 20, 2020

## Introduction

### Invitation

#### Call to Worship:

We meet together today to remember who we are as God's children. We also remember the journey we have taken this week, recognizing that God is with us in all things and provides for our spiritual growth, and in Christ, makes us whole. May we celebrate the presence of Christ in our midst!

**Hymn:** "Lead On, O Cloud of Presence"

**Reading the Word:** Exodus 16:2-15

**Message:** "Manna in the Wilderness"

Rev. Deb Hanson

#### Prayer:

We come to worship and praise you, Giving God. You feed us with the bread of heaven and renew our spirits when we are together in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Remind us that you are with us even in the wildernesses of our lives, and that you provide for us so that we can continue the journey. Lead us and help us to trust you and your guidance; and give us grace to grow in faith and in fellowship with one another. Help us remember our call to serve you and to care for others with your love, compassion, and kindness. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

#### The Lord's Prayer:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

**Hymn:** "God Will Take Care of You"

#### Blessing

## Exodus 16: 2-15

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. In that way, I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days”. So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “In the evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because he had heard your complaining against the Lord. For what are we, that you complain against us?” And Moses said, “When the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the Lord has heard the complaining that you utter against him - what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the Lord”.

Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, ‘Draw near to the Lord, for he had heard your complaining’”. And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. The Lord spoke to Moses and said, “I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, “At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God”.

In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “what is it?” For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat.



**SERMON TRANSCRIPT  
GIVEN BY  
Rev. Dr. Deb Hanson**



## **Message “Manna in the Wilderness”**

**Rev. Dr. Debra Hanson**

The journey for the newly freed tribes of Israel had barely begun when the people began to complain. In the passages before today's reading, we read that they began to run out of water, so Moses followed God's instructions and found a way to give them drinkable water. As the days turned into weeks, any provisions they may have brought with them began to dwindle, and they were faced with a new dilemma: lack of food.

Somehow, when they looked back at what they left in Egypt, their memories conjured up plenty of food under Pharaoh's command, which wasn't the case at all. Pharaoh was cruel and uncaring toward the Israelites, and they were forced to find whatever they could in order to feed themselves and their families. However, sometimes our minds trick us into thinking that it was definitely better before.

We hear that now as we continue to move through these months of the COVID pandemic. “I just want things the way they used to be! When are we going to return to normal?” Do we really want to return to the way things used to be? Think about it, the fighting, arguing, power struggles, and unrest in our country and world is still there, and it was there before the pandemic.

Is this what we want to have again? Maybe we could use this time to find new ways of being, new methods of relationship building, new offers of peace, compromise, or consensus. Maybe we need a “New Normal,” one that we can build together so that the world will be a better place.

Today's story is about a nation of people longing for freedom and a better life, but who faced a wilderness of the unknown, which is what we face, too. When we, as humans, are unsure, we cling to the past, thinking it was better than what we have now. The Israelites were no different. As they wandered in the wilderness, they faced insecurity, anxiety, and hunger, so they complained bitterly to Moses and Aaron. They did not realize that they needed to go through a type of re-orientation and a process of learning how to trust in God's provisions for them. They would learn that they had rules by which to live so that they would become God's people who would build a community based on integrity, honor, care, and compassion.

The wilderness was where they would find hardships and challenges, but it was also where they would learn that God would provide, and that they would be able to find ways to be self-sufficient with God's guidance and help. Where Egypt had been a place of oppression and poverty, the Promised Land would provide them with a new start and new experiences. But in order to be able to live there, they needed to have confidence in God's guidance and care for them, as well as the ability to live in God's ways.

Their upheaval and uncertainty would continue as they travel through the wilderness and learn about being God's chosen people. The journey would take forty years of stumbling, complaining, growing, and becoming. They would learn that they could trust God, even though they would falter often and face hardships along the way.

Today's lesson is a reminder that we may complain about our circumstances, too, but we often miss the ways in which God touches our lives and is with us through thick and thin. We forget that we have many blessings and often more than we need, when, even in our own state, our own city or town, we have people who face food insecurity. We forget that we may have a lot to share, and in our need for more, we buy more, keep filling our closets, cupboards, and homes with stuff that often stays stored away and unused.

When we think about the plight of the Israelites with their lack of food and water, maybe we can remember that in our world today, we are part of the abundance of God's blessings that can make a difference for those around us who seek the basic necessities of life. How can we feed the hungry, offer water to those who have no clean drinking water, provide clothing to those who have little or none?

I remember hearing a story about Mother Teresa. Someone had brought a bag of rice to her for the poor families, so she divided it into smaller packages and took it to the houses in the neighborhood. One of the families, immediately divided theirs in half and took it to another neighbor. Mother Teresa explained that the poor understand what it means to be hungry, so they share from what they have so that others will not go hungry either.

As we travel our own wildernesses, as we think about the anxiety in our own time, let us also think about those who need a word of hope, the touch of God's hand through us, and the help that we can give out of our own abundance because of God's blessings in our lives. Let us learn to trust God's presence with us as we strive to be faithful in living as God's children. Amen.



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# PRAYER LIST

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Jeanne Westcott

Jim Slater

Amelia and Michelle

Barbara Glidden

John

Gil Stebbins

Danny Westbrook

Dan Strange

Bobbie Noble

Judy Doyon

Kathy and James

Rev. Charles Hartman

Those who have lost loved ones to

COVID-19

Those in nursing and assisted living care

Our Denomination

Our Church Family