

Exodus 16:1-27: Manna and quail

Welcome/opening prayer

Hymn 1 – 422 Lead us, Heavenly Father, lead us

Confession (SLIDES)

Collect: Merciful God, your Son came to save us and bore our sins on the cross: may we trust in your mercy and know your love, rejoicing in the righteousness that is ours through Jesus Christ our Lord

KIDS SONG 2 – Great Big God (track 1)

Readings: Exodus 16:1-27, Matthew 6:31-34

Song 3 – All through history (track 3)

GAME – What is it? (SLIDES)

Heart of story – what does God feed Israelites (ASK) – Manna and quail. (SLIDE) But word manna means ‘What is it’. That’s why it’s called manna, because people went and took a look at it and said ‘Manna’ – READ v15.

So good news for you – you get to eat some Manna today, don’t know if you realised, but we actually have manna now – hand out Wotsits. (SLIDE)

Think about story today...

RECAP – Israelites made it out of Egypt – dramatic intervention of God – first in plagues (show that God is only real God), then crossing Red Sea.

3 great problems (SLIDE) – sea, army and desert. 2 of 3 had been dealt with (SLIDE) – but still desert. How to survive?

God already at work – not least that survived >3 days – but brought them via bitter waters of Marah to oasis of Elim by end of ch15. Already supernatural: READ 15:26

But need a long term solution – 6 weeks into Exodus people are grumbling again: READ v3.

Funny how easy it is to view through rose-tinted spectacles isn't it? (SLIDE) 'There we had all we wanted.' Yeah you were slaves and the king was attempting genocide on your male children, but otherwise everything was fine!

Brief pause: how do you see life? Was it always better in the past? Natural human response, and maybe true for some of us – but need to be careful when it comes to our spiritual lives. Certain sort of Christian always harking back to 'glory days', stuck in past. Spiritual emu – SLIDE. *Can't travel forwards if always looking behind you.* Real glory days are to come!

Selective memory is important, isn't it? (SLIDE) But it's interesting what Israelites choose to remember: not intervention of God, but old life in Egypt. Selective memory very important, *what we choose to remember matters.*

What do you choose to remember? When you've failed, or you feel that God has let you down – or times that God has come through for you, prayers have been answered? I find it so easy to forget what God has done, and forgetting cripples a spiritual life. Let's not forget!

Key phrase – at least twice v6, v8: 'You will know that it was the Lord.' (SLIDE). What's the fundamental thing that Israel needs to learn – that **God provides**, that what is happening is not just a series of coincidences, but God is actually getting involved and providing for them. It's basically a question of TRUST (SLIDE) – 'faith in action'.

Fundamental point for us too, isn't it. This teaching doesn't change – our other passage makes same point: Jesus telling his disciples not to worry because if we seek God then he will take care of the rest, he will provide for our needs. Trust is faith in action.

But it's so easy not to believe that – selective memory thing again – and passage highlights 3 temptations which have their root in a lack of trust that God will provide, 3 things in fact which are just as much temptations for us. And we'll see how God deals with each one.

GREED (SLIDE) – taking more than you need. READ v16.

‘Gather as much as you need.’ Not a phrase Western world likes to hear very much. Talked before about modern advertising industry is built on creating needs we didn’t know we had and then persuading us continually to buy more and more. But God’s command is very simple: READ v16a. **(SLIDE)** Not more than you need – just ‘as much’.

And in fact Israel obeys it and look what happens: v17-v18

What’s interesting is how this verse is used by Paul in the NT as a picture of the ideal Christian community, where radical generosity means that everyone is provided for: READ 2 Cor 8:13-15.

What we’ve been noticing is how Exodus is not just a nice Sunday school story, but *a really important part of the bible, whose lessons shape how we understand God and what it means to be his people*. Here we are again, something tucked away here in Exodus 16 is right at the front of Paul’s mind when he comes to teach on how Christians should give.

Need to ask ourselves regularly: have we got too much? And is there someone who has too little who could benefit?

HOARDING (SLIDE) – ‘just in case’ mentality. God’s command via Moses was – READ v19. **(SLIDE)**

Similar idea, but interesting that again this idea forms an important part of teaching of Jesus. How are we taught to pray? **(ASK)**: Our Father.... ‘Give us today our daily bread.’ He’s picking up the Manna idea, isn’t he? Give us today what we need for today. Not what we need for tomorrow as well, just what we need for today.

And look what happens when people disobey it: READ v20. You can imagine God rolling his eyes – ‘you don’t get it, do you?’

Nothing wrong with financial planning. But don’t let it suffocate your faith.

WORKAHOLISM (SLIDE) – work all time, 7 days a week. God’s word to Israelites was: READ v26. **(SLIDE)** Set aside a day for God and for rest. And God will provide.

As our society turns away from God, one of clear signs of that is how we've abandoned his pattern of healthy living, the balance of work and rest. But fundamental pattern established by God at beginning of bible hasn't changed, and it's interesting how he forces Israel to adopt it in desert. Knows that when left to their devices many will ignore it – hence prophets repeatedly warn Israel about this in years to come.

Challenge to us: can't control our shift patterns, or major changes in society. But *do we trust God enough to leave work where it is and rest and spend time with him?* Preaching to myself as much as you. There's always more I can do, and I carry guilt of not using every minute productively as much or more than many of you.

But this little story in Exodus challenges me to a new way of living. A way free from the anxiety which drives us to greed and hoarding and constant work – a life which lives by the simple principle of trust in God. (SLIDE)

Trust me, says God. I am good, I will provide for all those who are serious about seeking me. Israelites had no plan B – we do. Will we choose to trust, and find the great joy of what it means to be people where... READ v18b.

READ Matthew 6:31-33.

Hymn 4 – 273 Great is thy faithfulness

Prayers

Notices

Hymn 5 – 275 Guide me O thou great Redeemer

Final prayer/blessing