

Exodus 16:1-12

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Preacher: Donald Martin

[0 : 00] Let's pray. Father, we just ask that you would still our hearts and our minds now as we consider your word together.

Give us that sense of stillness and peace, and may the peace of Christ be with each one of us as we think, and these things which you have given to us to hear and to proclaim today in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, how's the diet going? After the indulgences of Christmas and New Year, supermarket shelves empty of festive fare, and all those mince pies, delicious cakes and chocolates, which we all ate, and the pallet loads of sweeties.

And really, some of it may still be hanging around our waists, but we're working on it, some of us. We're encouraged to diet.

We're encouraged to indulge up to Christmas, and we're encouraged to diet afterwards. I think it's all a ploy to get us to eat all that lovely food, all the different foods that are set before us.

[1 : 29] And then another organization comes in, like Weight Watchers, and they tell us to eat different foods. So it's all a marketing ploy, I think. You can't have missed the magazines and TV programs on diets, promoting the diet ideas, like the 5-2 diet in the Daily Mail.

And I heard of one amazing diet, where you lose a stone in three weeks. Some of us would like to try that, maybe. But the only thing you can eat is potatoes.

Not chips, not crisps, just potatoes. But you lose a stone, seemingly. Well, we have read about a very restrictive diet from Exodus chapter 16 today.

A diet with two items on the menu. Manna for breakfast, and quail for supper. Now, I cannot imagine for a moment that the children of Israel had weight problems as they came through the desert over these 40 long years, some 3,500 years ago.

I remember in my early career as a supermarket manager, I used to work with a company called William Lowe, no longer in existence, being told at a seminar that the Israeli government offered avocados to their elderly residents.

[2 : 58] Maybe you could, there's a couple of slides, or four slides I want to show. We'll let them fix the slides.

Well, the avocado is said to have nutrients, all the nutrients needed for a healthy life. Now, I've never checked it out. But listen to what was written in one health journal.

Avocados are one of the richest, delightful, and adequate nutritious foods on planet Earth. They are loaded with good fat content. Besides that, avocados are packed with anti-aging nutrients, disease-fighting antioxidants, and nearly 20 different minerals and vitamins.

There's even, in the photo on the right there, there's even a restaurant in Amsterdam called the Avocado Show, which is all the menus based more or less on avocado.

And I think avocados are something like marmite. You either love it or hate it. I love marmite. Avocados, not quite so sure of yet.

[4 : 08] I'm working on it. Now, by the time we get to a reading in Exodus 16, which we read from this morning, the children of Israel have already been on the march across the desert for a month, for 30 days.

Now, the next slide is a map. It's too far for me to see, but you can see day one and two in yellow, top right, and then the other days on the side of the Gulf of Aqaba.

And then there's another slide, the Jewish calendar, which is between March and April. This has all happened. And there's a final slide, which I could have shown later, but that's a quail, if you don't know what a quail looks like.

Okay, thank you. So, by the 25th day, having crossed the Red Sea, they are now fully free, away from their captors in Egypt.

And in chapter 15, the previous chapter, they had grumbled because of the bitter water of Marah. And Moses prayed to God, and he gave them the tools, a piece of wood to throw in for the water to become sweet.

[5 : 31] And this was an opportunity for God to offer something which would be to their benefit. But would they give any heed?

He said this in 15 and 26, if you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord who heals you.

What a promise. And as it were, to show that he meant what he said, he takes them to an oasis in the desert. Verse 27. Then they came to Elam, where there were 12 springs and 70 palm trees, and they camped there near the water.

Now, Elam was a temporary oasis of comfort and rest before moving on. And then we read, they set out from Elam.

And all the congregations of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which has been Elam and Sinai, on the 15th day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt.

[6 : 44] And the whole people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And they accused Moses of trying to kill them.

And I don't think for a moment that Moses and Aaron deserved to be accused of leading people to their death. But that's the sort of thing that we as human beings do, if things are not going as we planned.

We want to blame someone else. It wasn't me. It was him or her. Now, what Moses was looking to give his people was freedom.

And the new life God had promised in the land of promise, in the promised land. But consider this. It's now a month since leaving Egypt.

And any food that the two million plus people had taken with them, by now would have largely been consumed. And fingers were pointing at Moses.

[7 : 42] You've brought us here. Their minds went back to the supposedly good days in Egypt.

Where there were plenty of meat, plenty of bread. But had they forgotten in the midst of their time in Egypt that the Lord had made them a promise?

That one day they would return to the land of Canaan, the land of plenty? They seemed to have a twisted notion that all was well in Egypt when it wasn't.

And now Moses and Aaron have brought them out into this misery. Now, whatever situation we find ourselves in, God knows.

And as we look to him, he will hold us fast. Now, the Gettys have a song which basically says that. When I fear my faith will fail, Christ will hold me fast. When the tempter would prevail, he will hold me fast.

[8 : 45] I could never keep my hold through life's fearful path. For my love is often cold. He must hold me fast. And the Lord can hold the people of Israel fast going through this desert.

And he's going to perform a miracle for his people. A miracle that keeps on giving for 40 whole years. But at that moment, when they were grumbling, they didn't know.

You see, we never really know what God has in store for us. We may be going through the most trying time of our lives. And see only blackness and bleakness before us.

But we need to go back to the idea that he will hold us fast. Then the Lord said to Moses, 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, that I may test them whether they will walk in my law or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.

[10 : 07] Now, we've experienced snow even in recent days, the flurries of snow coming down from the sky. But I don't think any of us have ever seen bread like manna coming.

And yet, we accept that it's God, God's hand, who provides for our needs time and time again.

Again, he brings out of his storehouse that which we never knew existed. And at times, he may use people like you and I to be the provider to give to somebody else for the needs of another person or a cause.

Back in Gardens and a few years ago, the church sent a gift, a monthly gift, to a missionary working in North Africa.

She presented radio programs, radio broadcasts to a majority Muslim nation. And a few weeks later, we got a letter of thanks back from the missionary.

[11:16] And she said that the money came at the very moment, the very day she needed to pay for the next few months of airtime.

That's God's hand at work. Timely provision. Another time, a Bible college head came to speak at the church.

Her secondary role was ministering to prostitutes in the city, prostitutes that have been trafficked from Eastern Europe and further beyond. And on her visit to her, she gave us such an inspirational account of the work that they provide for trafficked women.

The gift that was given on that occasion furnished a new office. They were setting up where they were working in the center of the city, where young women and men too were being brought into safety, into shelter.

And I never forget the words we read in Acts, words of the attribute to the Lord Jesus himself, it is more blessed to give than to receive.

[12:29] And what a blessing it is when you see the Lord's work furthering in different places through our own little meager efforts.

And here, although bread was coming to heaven and falling in the desert, it wasn't served to them on a plate. They had to go out and pick it up. They had to go out and gather it. And that may be a picture of ourselves.

We often pray for different things, different situations. But when we pray about a situation, we may have to get up on our feet and do something about it.

We have to do something ourselves for that prayer to be answered. They had to go out to gather the bread and the quail.

And what the Israelites had to do on this occasion was to obey God's instructions. Well, God wouldn't have to wait too long for them to show their true minds.

[13:46] Wouldn't you think that they would have begun to have trusted God by now? For their experience coming through the plagues, they had experienced the waters of the Red Sea opening up before them.

And when Moses revealed God's coming for us in the evening and morning, he indicated to them that this would be God's glory in the provision for his people.

How gracious God is. And in his provision, he was saying to the people, in the middle of the desert, the food that they had brought from Egypt haven't run out, I am still with you.

I am going through this period with you. Even although they had stood up against him and complained and moaned and groaned. So we've now come up to around about the 32nd day after leaving Egypt.

They were hungry. They were wishing they had never left Egypt. And then they saw this cloud coming in the wilderness. And behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.

[15:02] And the Lord told Moses that he had heard their grumbling. Notice they weren't praying. Not groaning. Just grumbling. You see, the Lord hears our prayers.

The Lord hears our groans. But we see here that he also hears the grumbling of his people. And even when they were grumbling, the Lord is gracious to them.

And he makes provision. I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, At twilight you shall eat meat. And in the morning you shall be filled with bread.

And then you shall know that I am the Lord your God. So the meat was given in a little bird called quail, which we saw on the screen earlier on.

But they came in such great numbers that over 2 million people would be fed every day for 40 years.

[16:04] This is a truly amazing provision. An amazing display of the goodness and the greatness and the mercy of God. Now quail are migrating birds.

But migration doesn't normally last for 40 years. So we can only marvel at this provision.

Now it's said that about between, well, over 100 million birds come through the Middle East and certainly Israel every year. And I know of a minister who used to go out there every year at the time of migration of birds.

But for these birds to have been there every day for 40 years is nothing short of a miracle of God. Verse 13 says, In the morning Jew lay around the camp, and when the Jew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground.

[17:14] When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, What is it? For they did not know what it was. Now, we don't have any samples of manna nowadays.

We really don't know exactly what it might have been like. And what could you do with it? Well, manna was white, like frosted, say.

See, it was flat. It was flaky. It appeared on the ground with a dew. It melted in the sun, so it had to be gathered quickly. It could be boiled or baked, it tells us further on in verse 23, perhaps making kind of dough balls for your quail mince or whatever.

And bread. It was, after all, bread from heaven. It tasted like wafers made with honey. You see, God gave them delicious food.

It could be stored in jars, but it would only last a day. Let no one leave any of it over till the morning. Like the avocado we thought about earlier, it, this manna and quail, provided the nutritional needs for the people of Israel for 40 long years.

[18:35] Now, some of us eat more than others. Men, usually more than women. But whatever was gathered in the desert that day or each day was just enough.

Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat. I don't think there was any need for food recycling there in the desert.

But human greed came in very quickly, almost immediately. And it appears that they'd heard the instructions from Moses.

They heard what God's command was saying through Moses. They felt that they knew best. Maybe someone like me, someone like you, they did not listen to Moses.

Some left part of it till the morning, and had bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them. And when it came to the sixth day, they had to go out to gather double.

[19:47] God had made provision for them as well. And when they went out to gather the manna that day, they were surprised to find that there was a double amount. And they came to tell Moses.

Look at what we found. Twice as much. But they knew. Or they should have known. But incredibly, some of them went out again on the seventh day, on the Sabbath day, only to find that there was none.

Greed and lack of faith in God working together. And the Lord said to Moses, How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws?

See, the Lord has given you the Sabbath. Therefore, on the sixth day, he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place. Let no one go out of his place on the seventh day, so the people rested on the seventh day.

I remember growing up in Lewis. Sunday was Sunday. It was a day of worship. No shops were open.

[20:59] No planes flew. No ferries sailed. No buses ran except for the service bus taking people to church on the Sunday. And you didn't pay the fare there.

You paid it on Monday or Tuesday or whenever. You had to make sure that your supplies in for Sunday by Saturday. If you owned a car, you had to be fueled up by Saturday because you couldn't get any on Sunday.

No filling stays were open. And truly, there was nothing wrong with having that special day. But there was everything right with it.

People didn't have to work. It was truly a day of rest and worship. Whether or not you were a man, a woman, or faith, it was a special day. Oh, I have to admit that there was a bit of legalism attached to it in some forms, which wasn't always helpful.

But still, aside that, it was a very special day that we seem to have lost forever. Because everything now is, as they say, 24-7.

[22:05] Nothing ever stops. Even back 3,500 years ago, in the desert, it was a day of rest.

The seventh day was a Sabbath of the Lord, provided by the Lord for people's rest. And even then, they tried to cast that day aside.

And people went out to collect the manna when they were already told there would be none. The Lord had said so. Surely, this must have been a powerful lesson to the people traveling across the

desert.

That they might heed what the Lord, their God, had instructed. It's good to expand on that principle if we had time to do so.

Suffice to say that we, as human beings, still look for fulfillment in places where God desires that we don't go. If we only paid heed to what God speaks to our hearts, surely, sometimes, oftentimes, our lives might even be better.

[23 : 23] The people of Israel ate manna for forty years till they came to a habitable land. They ate manna till they came to the border of the land of Canaan.

Are there lessons for us out of a story like this from so long ago? Well, I found in Warren Worsby's commentary just a summary which is beautiful.

The manna is a picture of Jesus Christ. John 6. The manna came only to Israel and all it could do was sustain physical life.

But the Savior came for the whole world and he gives spiritual life. If the Jews did not appropriate the manna, they died.

Sinners must believe in Jesus Christ to receive life. Feeding you on the manna was also a picture of your daily appropriation of Christ through the word of God.

[24 : 30] Just as your food becomes a part of your very being, so the word strengthens your inner person when you read it. Meditate upon it and obey it.

Just as the Jews could not live in yester's manna, so you cannot lift in yester's spiritual diet. Begin each day with the Lord and he will give you what you need for facing the burdens and the battles ahead.

That's a fine summary of that chapter linking in the chapter, John chapter 6. And it's interesting if you know anything about the Jewish people and it's a practice that we had in the islands.

You say grace before a meal. Jews say grace after a meal and that comes from Deuteronomy.

When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land that he has given you.

They were about to enter the promised land when God said this to them. Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God failing to observe his commandments, his laws and his decrees that I'm giving you that day.

[25 : 42] Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied and when you build fine houses and settle down and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

And we cannot forget the Lord who brought us out of the Egypt of sin. We have got to remember him every day. As Christians today, I think we still benefit from this day we call the Lord's Day.

It's a different day for us to the other six that we might rest and recuperate for another new week.

We may have Michael Moses' 5-2 diet to get into shape, but there are rules and regulations to achieve that goal as well.

And Moses here introduces what you might call the 6-1 diet. And it will also help us today, especially in the spiritual way. And one day, to have one day different from others is special for the follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus said in John 6, I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate manna in the desert, yet they died.

[27 : 02] But here is a bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread, said Jesus, that came down from heaven.

If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

Amen. And may the Lord bless to us these thoughts from his holy word. Let's pray. The Lord thank you for asking about the life and That Will is a lie.

This is the first question. Tonight there is a lovely friend of mine and millimeter of love and gentle writes away your love■ your minds and that Are we ghouls that are really soon.