

10th S after Pentecost (7/28/24) SM, SJ

Exodus 16:1–15 - ¹The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. ²In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. ³The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.” ⁴Then the Lord said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. ⁵On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.” ⁶So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “In the evening you will know that it was the Lord who brought you out of Egypt, ⁷and in the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?” ⁸Moses also said, “You will know that it was the Lord when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the Lord.” ⁹Then Moses told Aaron, “Say to the entire Israelite community, ‘Come before the Lord, for he has heard your grumbling.’” ¹⁰While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud. ¹¹The Lord said to Moses, ¹²“I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, ‘At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.’” ¹³That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. ¹⁴When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. ¹⁵When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat.

In the name to whom all glory, honor and praise belong, our holy Triune God, dear fellow redeemed

Because we are a liturgical church, our church follows what we call the church year, which includes Christmas, Easter, Epiphany, Lent, Pentecost, etc. Along with this, we follow a lectionary, a list of readings for the various days of the year. We do this except for special days like an anniversary or mission festival or the Wednesdays of Lent.

Yet that also means that the Bible readings repeat every three years, or in some cases, every single year. So as a pastor, how do you talk the same thing in different ways – especially if you’ve preached about many times before?

One way to do it is to look for something different in the text. Is there a different name of God or an ability of God that is used in those verses? Is there some way that this section is unique or different like the Transfiguration or Palm Sunday? Or maybe there is something important that maybe most people don’t notice as they listen to it?

The obvious thing today is the manna, that unique bread that God gave to the Israelites. Yet there is something else very special today, and that is that the glory of God appeared to the Israelites, and as we listen today to the words of Moses recorded in Exodus, we discover that:

We See the Glory of the Lord

1. The Lord listens
2. The Lord provides

1. The Lord listens

We probably talk about “God’s glory” or “giving glory to God” fairly often, and most of those we’re talking about our honoring and giving glory to God. However, today the **glory of the LORD** refers God displaying or manifesting himself. Sometimes we refer to this appearances of God’s glory as the majestic glory, because God is showing us his majesty and power, as he did on Mt. Sinai, in the pillar of fire, or the cloud that entered into the temple of Solomon as it was dedicated.

The Lord showed himself to his people; he displayed his glory to them here, but let’s stop and consider the situation. Not terribly long before, the Israelites had been slaves in Egypt. With 10 miracles we call “plagues,” they were freed. Then God spread apart the waters of the Red Sea, while blocking the army of Egypt, using a strong wind to dry out the wet ground before them, and then once they were ashore, freeing the water to sweep away the army of Egypt.

And what is their response? **If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.** Instead of being thankful for all that God had done, they thought they would have been better off if they were still in Egypt and that a callous God had brought them into the Sinai wilderness to die!

Our natural reaction to all this is: “How could they do this? How could they be so unthankful for all that God had done

for them? How could they not trust that the God who saved them from Egypt would provide them with the simple things they needed to stay alive?” Then we think that if we were in their situation, we would have been different!

Yet is that the truth? How often have we heard what God has done for us, sending his Son to be our Savior, creating us, planting us in a family, planting us also in a church family, and then rather being thankful and/or trusting, we grumbled that God hasn't given us more or our minds were filled with worry or doubts that God really would take care of us. In other words, we have acted exactly like the Children of Israel.

At this time, something wondrous happened. **While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud.** ¹¹**The Lord said to Moses,** ¹²**“I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites.** In this situation, God chooses to appear to them and he allows these grumbling and complaining people see his glory, at least a little bit of it. He shows that he listens to his people.

We couldn't have blamed God if he had done to these grumblers and complainers and done to them what he had done to the mighty army of Egypt. Yet the Lord of grace and mercy deigned to listen to his people. Sinful as they were, they were still God's people and he listen to the words – to the prayers – of his people. Sinful as we are, we also still are God's people, and still today he listens to our words, to our prayers, to the prayers of his people.

2. The Lord provides

Today we see that our Lord not only listens to our prayers, but he provides for us also.

Notice the Bible uses “Lord” instead of God. We often use – and I do it too sometimes – God and Lord interchangeably, but really they differ in meaning. “God” emphasizes God as the creator and maker of all things, as well as the God who knows everything and as the fearful Judge will judge everyone on Judgment Day.

The name “Lord,” however, emphasizes the mercy and grace of God, the compassionate God who forgives sinners and desires their salvation, who treats us far, far better than our sins deserve. God himself explains what his name “the Lord” means in the book of Exodus to Moses: **The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.**

Now we understand how God could listen to their grumbling and complaining and not send fire and brimstone down from heaven. The same God mercifully made the first promise of the Savior after Adam & Eve sinned, sent that Savior to forgive our sins, our grumbling and our complaints and all of our sins.

That same mercy and compassionate also caused him to send them the food that they needed instead of the punishment deserved. It causes God still today in the words of the psalmist to daily **open his hands and satisfy the needs of every living thing.** (Ps 145:16) Jesus reminds us that God in his mercy **causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.** (Mt 5:45) God not only shows mercy to us but to all mankind.

God showed his glory to the Israelites so that they would know that he had listened to them and he would give them not only bread – manna – but also meat, quail. He did for forty years as they wandered in the wilderness, and it was only when they entered into the promised land that the manna and quail stopped. Even then God provided for them in a land flowing with milk and honey.

God hears our prayers too and he shows himself to us as well. First he shows us his love and mercy to us in the gift of his only Son, and then he shows his grace and mercy again in his sacraments. How blessed we are that God hears us and provides for us in his mercy and love! Amen.