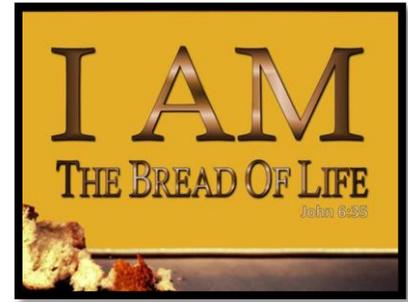


TEXT: Exodus 16:2-20  
 THEME: The Lord Provides  
 1. Bread from Heaven  
 2. Miracle Food



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

### BREAD FROM HEAVEN

In a way, we can certainly sympathize with the people of Israel. They didn't grumble for no reason. They truly had a problem, and their problem was very serious. As many as two million men, women, and children were wandering through a barren desert. They were walking and had been for about a month. This desert they were in is one of the driest and most desolate places on the earth. And food and drink were not their only problem. What about clothes? There were no Walmarts in the desert. There weren't any hospitals. Even from a human point of view, it would take a miracle to provide for all these people. They could hardly come to any other conclusion except that all of them would die.

The ironic thing is that the Israelites had plenty of gold and silver. They had been commanded by God to plunder the Egyptians before they left. But all their wealth could not save them; perhaps that was a lesson the Lord was teaching the Israelites and us.

No one needs to explain to us the importance of daily bread. It is essential. It is life or death to us. Without food we will die.

Maybe that's why Jesus said, **"I am the bread of life" (John 6:35)**. Jesus is essential. We have our life through him. He is so vitally important to our souls that without him we are dead.

Like the Israelites, we were living in a spiritual desert. We had no righteousness or obedience before God that could give life to our parched souls. We were **"dead in...transgressions and sins" (Ephesians 2:1)**. But Jesus is the Bread that gives us spiritual life. He provided us with righteousness by living a holy life for us. He paid for all our sins by dying on the cross. Paul said, God **"made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions" (Ephesians 2:5)**.

Jesus is our spiritual food. But, of course, food on a plate won't keep anyone alive. If we want that food to benefit us, then we need to take it in. To have food is good, but to eat food is even better. In the Bible, God has provided you with an endless supply of spiritual food and drink. Do you always take advantage of the rich feast that God has given? Or do you sometimes leave it sitting on the plate uneaten, where it can't do any good?

Feast your soul on the Bread that came from heaven. As Jesus said, **"If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever" (John 6:51)**.

But wait a minute! Some of us are on low-carb diets; we can't be eating bread. Of course, there are "Christian" churches that will gladly feed you a low-carb spiritual diet. I recently attended funeral conducted by the pastor of a large non-denominational church. His funeral message was definitely low carb, or no carb, for there was no mention of Jesus the Bread of Life, no mention of Jesus as our one and only Savior from sin, death, and hell. It was not a nutritious spiritual meal; it was not a satisfying spiritual meal.

It seems that dieticians and nutritionists are always touting the wondrously healthy qualities of some new miracle food. Oftentimes, the claims these people make seem too good to be true. Dill pickles will reduce the risk of cancer. Anchovies may help lower your cholesterol. A steady diet of radishes can help you add lean muscle without hanging extra tonnage on your waistline. I think I know how that one works: after eating all those radishes you will have a lot more time to work out at the gym because no one will want to hang out with you. It all sounds very wonderful. But here the adage likely holds: If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

#### MIRACLE FOOD

When God gave bread to his people in the desert, it was truly a miracle food—and in more ways than one. Its regular appearance on the ground in the barren desert was certainly a miracle, as was its remarkably short shelf life. But here is some that was equally amazing: God instructed the people to gather for each person one omer—about two quarts. Large families gathered much and small families gathered little, but in the end, each person had one omer. And it was enough for them. The three-year-old girl who spent her day playing with her dolls did not have too much manna, and the 25-year-old man who dug ditches for a living never needed more. Each one had just enough, because God made it to be enough.

We ask the question constantly: "Do I have enough?" Is my salary enough to put food on the table and a shoe on every foot? What about college expenses? How can I possibly save enough for that? Will my retirement account grow large enough that it won't run out before I die?

How do we even know how much is enough? We tend to judge "enough" by looking at the dollar signs, and only if the number that follows is sufficiently astronomical do we begin to feel secure. But it isn't about dollars. If God gives you your omer, then you will have enough. As we heard in last week's second lesson: **"God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8).** God's omer is enough for each of us, so we confidently pray: **"Give us today our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11).** Amen.

## *prayer of the church*

Lord of our lives, by sending your Son to live and die as our perfect substitute, you provided forgiveness and salvation for a world of sinners. We praise you for your generous saving love. We thank you for providing us with the Bread of Life, and for reaching out to each of us personally with your Word and the water of Baptism. You have set us apart as people who belong to you, people whose purpose in life is to receive your love, share your love, and live to your glory.

Crush the selfishness that comes to us naturally, and fill us with joyful generosity. Grant that the gifts we bring to you may show that we are just as diligent and just as interested in carrying out your business as we are in carrying out our own.

Triune God, as Rusty and Marilyn Garwick celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, accept our heartfelt thanks for all the blessings they have received. As companions on the journey through life, they have loved, consoled, and supported each other, but most important, they have grown closer to you. By your grace they have maintained a Christian home and raised their children in the training and instruction of the Lord. They have learned forgiveness and unconditional love from you. Your Word has been a lamp to their feet and a light for their path. Keep them committed to each other and to you. Continue to supply their earthly needs according to your will. Give them joy in the years to come.

O Lord, your mercies are new to us every day! We give you thanks for improving the health of Brian Abraham, Richard Bender, Garnet Bogner, Cindy Hadd, Rick Schoof, and Janet Wagester, my sister. Continue your healing within them, that they may return to the work that you have given them to do in your kingdom of grace.

We dare to ask all this Father, not because we deserve to ask it but because your Son has earned for us the right to approach you as your dear children. Amen.