

Monday, June 22

Read

Exodus, Chapter 16

Reflect

Send us back to Egypt! I would prefer death as a slave rather than starving as a free person! Chapter 16 opens with the runaway Hebrew slaves grumbling and complaining about how uncomfortable the new and unfamiliar freedom is that God has given them. God's response is not a strategic plan toward the Hebrews' perpetual comfort. Nor is God's response to abandon these ungrateful grumbling freed slaves. God responds by meeting their needs on a daily basis. Manna, bread from heaven, is the mysterious provision God offers the Hebrew people. They are invited to participate in that provision by receiving it daily. The Hebrews begin the practice of collecting manna every morning. Everyone has enough. When they try to save some for the next day, it grows maggots. Manna is teaching them to increase their dependence on and partnership with God. In addition to manna, God also responds with the Sabbath. Every seven days, they don't have to work. Every seven days they can do something that they were never able to do in Egypt, stop working. They are no longer slaves, they're free. Karl Barth defined freedom in this way, "A being is free insofar as it can limit itself." There are those among the Hebrews who choose to go out and gather manna on the Sabbath day. They go out and work. God's grace is too much for them. They want to remain enslaved by their own abilities, capacities, and fool themselves into thinking they can take credit for their own survival. During this pandemic, we want to go back to Egypt. How many times have you said, I just want things to go back to the way they were. I'm uncomfortable and tired of this. The same way that God provides for the Hebrews, God also provides for us. Every day there is manna. Sometimes God even provides twice as much as we need. The practice of gathering manna is a practice of depending on God. Every single day gathering what God has provided.

Respond

What are you depending on right now? Are you gathering daily? Who or what are you depending on? What are you grumbling about? What do you want to go back to? What would moving forward with God into an unfamiliar freedom look like? What has quarantine caused you to stop doing?

Pray

Our father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Give us this day our daily bread, and give us the courage, wisdom, and patience to receive and gather it. Stir in our hearts and minds the new life and unfamiliar freedom you are calling us into. In the name of the bread of heaven that was broken for our sake, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, Amen.