

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the one who is our Daily Bread, Jesus Christ our Savior and our Lord, amen.

As many of you know, I am a veteran of Desert Storm. I was stationed at Langley AFB in Virginia, and we were the first troops in the country of Saudi Arabia on August 8, 1990. They say an army travels on its stomach, well, in the Air Force we ate pretty well. For breakfast and supper everyone went to the dining tent where we received the best food the Air Force could provide. We dined on scrumptious reconstituted scrambled eggs in the morning and rehydrated beef or shrimp in the evening. Both were fairly tolerable. Lunch was the biggest disappointment. We were each given one MRE every day. MRE stands for Meals Ready to Eat, but most of us referred to them as Meals Rejected by Everyone... No matter which entre you got in the bag, they all tasted pretty much the same. They even began including a tiny bottle of hot sauce so you could at least get some flavor. I don't think they needed to put an expiration date in the package. It was designed to last for decades...

In our scripture reading for today, the manna God rained down from heaven was just the opposite. It would melt and attract bugs in the heat of the afternoon. The writer of Exodus tells us this was to test the people. It was to ensure they would actually listen to God's Word. As the story begins today, the Israelites have already been freed from slavery in Egypt and God had miraculously brought them

across the Red Sea. These people had witnessed, firsthand, all these mighty acts of their living God who had brought them up, out of slavery in Egypt and was now teaching them how to be God's people.

Have you ever wondered why Moses led the Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years before entering the Promised Land? Most of us thought it was because Moses was too stubborn to stop and ask for directions, but the truth is God was training, teaching, and coaching these wandering nomads. God was helping them become a nation, a Holy Priesthood, the Chosen People of God. It wasn't Moses's fault it took 40 years, it was the hard headed, stiff necked people who either didn't understand God's commands or, more likely, willfully disobeyed God, or just as likely, couldn't bring themselves to trust in God to provide for their needs every single day.. They didn't trust God to provide and so they complained. They complained against Moses, asking why Moses had led them out into this wilderness, only to be killed by starvation. What they didn't seem to understand was that Moses was only the servant of their mighty God. So, when they complained against Moses, they were complaining against God. They were really asking if God wanted them to suffer and die a slow, agonizing death when they could have been living the good life back in Egypt. How soon we forget... That's the way of humans. We too soon forget the lessons we learned.

So, God is patient with them and forgives their lack of trust. God provides bread in the morning and meat in the evening. The timing and the sheer amount of the Manna and the meat was the real miracle. Scientists have discovered a certain species of insect that eats the wood of a certain bush that grows in that part of the world and when it does it secretes a substance that when dried and baked, makes a sort of bread or cake. The problem with that scientific explanation is that there are nowhere near enough of those insects or those bushes to produce enough of that substance to feed the estimated 2 million people who travelled with Moses. The same goes for the Quale. Yes, these migratory birds could have been blown off course by a strong western wind, but enough of them to feed all those people? Not hardly! As I said, the miracle was in the timing and the amount of food to feed that many people for 40 years, even as they moved from place to place. The manna and the Quale somehow kept finding their campsites.

This story of the manna coming from heaven is picked up in the New Testament book of John. Right after feeding over 5000 men plus women and children, Jesus gets into a boat and goes across the sea of Galilee. The recently fed people followed him and met him on the other side. When Jesus sees them he says they only followed him because of the food. He compared that great feeding miracle to the feeding of the Israelites in the wilderness, but says their ancestors ate the manna and still died. Those who eat the true bread from heaven will live

forever. Then he shocked them by adding that He himself is the Bread of Life that has come down from heaven. Those who eat of his flesh and drink of his blood will have eternal life.

This story of the manna in the wilderness is a foreshadowing of Christ. The people who ate the Manna still died in their sin. They were still trying to learn and God was still in the process of teaching them how to be His people. It seems to me that God makes a big deal out of our trusting Him. I mean this is the one thing God wants from us, our trust. That's the point of God limiting their supply of food to a single day. They would look forward to tomorrow, when once a gain God would provide. This would have been a good lesson to read back at the beginning of the pandemic when toilet paper was flying off the shelves. It may still be a good lesson for us all to learn as the many shortages continue to crop up as the pandemic continues to devastate so many lives, not to mention the national economy.

The way we react to shortages today is the same as those Israelites of long ago. As some of us were talking yesterday while decorating the basement for the Fall Festival, someone mentioned the fact that so many of the people who were fed the last couple of times at the Grace Resurrection Soup Kitchen suddenly had 3 or 4 or more homebound family members or neighbors who needed take home meals. The soup kitchen has gone from serving about 60 to 80 - meals to over 120. I'm not saying some of these take out meals weren't legitimate, but I suspect some of

that increased number is due to hoarding. Another story was told about living close to a golf course and after collecting a large amount of stray golf balls this person threw a bunch of them out onto the fairway of one of the holes on the course. She watched from her back porch as a couple of golfers came upon the treasure trove of golf balls. She said they decided the balls were still in very good condition, so they picked up every last one of them. They apparently never gave a thought to how many balls they might need for the rest of their round of golf, nor did they think of leaving some for the next foursome that was playing behind them.

Just when my holier than thou hat starts fitting pretty good and I'm looking down my very long and very judgmental nose at those people, I remember that every time I find Yoplait Blueberry Lite and Fit Yogurt at the grocery store, I buy every carton they have on the shelf. Once, not too long ago, they were unpacking cartons of yogurt and I grabbed the entire case of blueberry before it was even put on the shelf. We are all led by our stomachs. Yet, I'm not convinced that's where we fall into sin. God created us with stomachs that require feeding. God created all of our human appetites, so how can seeking to satisfy those appetites be sinful? I'm not talking about simple greed here. The problem is much more insidious than simple greed. Our first major problem is that we lack trust in our God to provide tomorrow what we're going to need for tomorrow. Some of you might object to my analysis by protesting that it's not that we don't trust in God to provide, but we

don't trust in the humans who run the systems of production and distribution down here in the real world. Using my own example, it's not that I don't trust God that there will be more blueberry yogurt next week, it's that I don't trust the grocer will order and stock enough for next week. So, I'll hoard what we can get today, since I don't trust the human side of the supply chain. Nice try... The Israelites complained against Moses, but everyone knew it was God they didn't trust.

My granddaughter, Emery is 2 years old. She loves to play the game where she climbs onto a chair and they throws herself down in my general direction knowing I will catch her. So far, I've been paying attention enough to see when she's getting ready for this little game of hers and I've been able to catch her. I know the day is coming when she will lose that childhood trust, but for now I'm just enjoying every minute. That's the kind of trust God wants from us. God wants us to trust in His abundance and in His willingness to bless us each and every day.

May we learn to rely on God for our daily bread and for all the necessary stuff we need to survive and to thrive. May we never forget the ultimate source of all our daily needs, God our Father. May we trust in God, but also in our Savior Jesus Christ for the one greatest need of all, the salvation we receive when we let go of our need to control everything and give our lives, our thanks, and our love to our heavenly Father who delights in our childlike trust. Amen.