

The Red Thread
Connecting Sunday Scriptures to Daily Life

Human Condition ~ Divine Nature

The story repeats all through history: humanity complains and God responds. But humanity always think they have the better answer.

The wilderness story in Exodus 16:2-4, 9-15 tells of the whole congregation murmuring and complaining against the leaders. "If only" is the common human phrase throughout salvation history. "If only" Moses had not followed God's command to lead the people out of slavery, they would not be starving in the wilderness. They could be dead in Egypt! This is the human idea of what would have been better! It is human nature to think we know what is better for us because we don't trust God. But despite our lack of trust and our complaining, God always responds providing what we need. God's provision is not always what we want or expect. On seeing the manna the people ask, "What is it?" Manna and quail doesn't look like prime rib and mashed potatoes that we might be asking for. But it was the food needed for sustenance in the wilderness. God gave just enough to the Israelites so that they would trust him for each day's provision.

Psalms 78:23-29 is a poetic rendering of this wilderness story. God provided for them "food enough." The LORD "rained down manna and winged birds" and they "ate and were well filled." When we are hungry and desperate enough, we receive what God provides without complaining or issuing "if only" statements to God. And we learn that we have what we truly need.

Ephesians 4:1-16 tells us how to rise above our "if only" thinking so that we can live together in peace and fullness. Human complaining leads to division in our family, our workplace, our church and in the world. We look to ourselves for the answer instead of hearing God's response and provision for us. God has called us to live in "humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love." This happens when we turn from the human condition of complaining to the divine nature of providing. "Each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift." We have been given more than we need to sustain us. When we recognize the manna that has rained down on us, we can be filled with peace and be reconciled with others.

John 6:24-35 helps us to recognize the manna God has provided in answer to our complaining. Jesus is the "bread of life." Jesus is the answer to our "if only" thinking. No matter what kind of wilderness we are in, no matter how lost, how hungry, how hurting we are, Jesus offers to fill us. He invites us to come and to believe so that we will never be hungry again.

Humanity complains. God provides. When we recognize the manna before us, our complaining will turn to faith and love, trusting our true Provider for what we need.

Pastor Marilyn