

**Rev. Darcy Hawk**  
**“Providence”**  
**September 20, 2020**

**Exodus 16:2-15**

<sup>2</sup>The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup>The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

<sup>4</sup>Then the Lord said to Moses, “I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. <sup>5</sup>On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days.” <sup>6</sup>So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “In the evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, <sup>7</sup>and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your complaining against the Lord. For what are we, that you complain against us?” <sup>8</sup>And Moses said, “When the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the Lord has heard the complaining that you utter against him — what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the Lord.” <sup>9</sup>Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, ‘Draw near to the Lord, for he has heard your complaining.’” <sup>10</sup>And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. <sup>11</sup>The Lord spoke to Moses and said, <sup>12</sup>“I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.’” <sup>13</sup>In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. <sup>14</sup>When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. <sup>15</sup>When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat.”

May you get what you ask for? Is that a blessing or a curse? It’s the dilemma Aladdin had with his magic lamp and, the core of many a folk tale. In our consumer driven culture we are constantly bombarded with things we “need.” That becomes obvious when you run across someone who has truly embraced simplicity. How can they get by with so little when I need so much? We’ve been convinced that not consuming is unpatriotic. Those whose memories go back to the Second World War know that meatless Tuesdays and *is this trip necessary* were ways citizens could support the effort to end tyranny but lately we are being told to buy more and gas up; it supports the war effort.

Henry David Thoreau went to live in a cabin on Walden Pond and came back regaling us with the joy of living simply. His everyday normal life in the 1800’s would seem amazingly simple to us. My idol was toppled by an English Professor who did her Doctoral dissertation on Thoreau who told us that the whole year he spent in that cabin every Sunday he walked to his mother’s house for dinner. And he invented the metal ring holding the eraser to the end of your pencil. I’m glad he had at least one hot home

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cooked meal each week but it does weaken his case for the joys of simplicity, and he only lived there for a year. Still such an exercise has value even if a person can't wait to return to *civilization*.

The children of Israel were hungry. They certainly had to embrace simplicity in pursuit of freedom but, as Lenin much later realized, “you can't eat freedom.” So they did what all believers have done. They complained to God. Well they went to the preacher, Moses, and told him to complain to God. After all who wants to risk making the Master of the Universe mad at them when God could get mad at Moses instead. Lo and behold, God does answer prayer; even grouchy complaining prayer. In fact you are far better off expressing your discontent in prayer because it's not like God doesn't know what goes on in your head. God found Adam and Eve hiding in Eden and God can find you. That's one of the things that amaze me about God's love. If you think of God as a close companion who goes with you everywhere then think about all the places you've forced God to go. There are situations even good friends could not drag you into or should not drag you into but God in loves goes where you go.

While God is not a trickster there are lessons to be learned and God has some joy in teaching them to us. So the hungry Israelites thought they were better off slaves in Egypt. You know I was fully an adult when I realized what a flesh pot really was. It is not a metaphor for misbehavior but, a big kettle full of beef and veg. Scholars have debated what manna actually was but, the Bible seems to draw a link between birds, dew and residue that might be a bit off putting, but God provides. That is the problem with answered prayer. God reserves the right to provide appropriately. You are hungry, ask for food et voila, this is food? In my family, “beggars can't be choosers,” was intoned when some picky eater piped up I don't like this. How often I wish that picky eater was still me because expanding my tastes in food coincided with expanding my waistline. Anyway, prayer gets answered in ways that are best for the recipient of the benefit. We are trained to want more but God is teaching us what is enough.

Ultimately greed is a fear based emotion prompting us humans to create a world where there are haves and have nots because who wants to go without. In all nature's abundance there are very few things humans need to hoard. We look for God to provide so much but miss the miracles that meet our everyday requirements for life. Go out and look around for manna; it's all around us ready to be enjoyed.