

2 In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. **3** The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the LORD’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.”

4 Then the LORD said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. **5** On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.”

6 So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “In the evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of Egypt, **7** and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?” **8** Moses also said, “You will know that it was the LORD when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD.”

9 Then Moses told Aaron, “Say to the entire Israelite community, ‘Come before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.’”

10 While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud.

11 The LORD said to Moses, **12** “I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, ‘At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.’”

13 That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. **14** When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. **15** When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was.

Moses said to them, “It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat.” **16** This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Each one is to gather as much as he needs. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.’ ”

17 The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. **18** And when they measured it by the omer, he who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little. Each one gathered as much as he needed.

19 Then Moses said to them, “No one is to keep any of it until morning.”

20 However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them. (NIV84)

Theme: Little Reminders

1. God reminds us of our salvation
2. God reminds us of who he is.

A husband buys some flowers or chocolate, or something of the like to give to his wife. he does this for no particular reason other than he loves his wife and wants to remind her of his love for her. The gift will remind her of just that. God does the same for us. The blessings that God gives to us are little reminders of who he is and what he has done for us. And we need these reminders, for we tend to forget about them or not think about him.

So today God reminds us of who he is and the salvation he won for us.

The Israelites needed help. They lived in Egypt for over 400 years. And by the end they were slaves. They were brutally treated by Pharaoh. They were forced to do manual labor. And they cried out for help. So God sent Moses to lead the people out of the Egypt. To convince Pharaoh to let his people go he sent 10 plagues on the land. And after the Passover the final plague—the killing of the first-born, Pharaoh sent the Israelites away. God had saved his people from oppression. He has rescued them from slavery.

But Pharaoh soon changed his mind. He had just let all of his free labor walk out of his country. So he gathered up his army—the strongest in the world at the time, and went after them. They caught up to the Israelites as they were getting close to the Red Sea. But God parted the Red Sea. He led the Israelites to walk through the sea on dry ground. But when the Egyptians followed them the large walls of water came crashing down. And the world’s strongest army and their

ruler were completely destroyed. Once again God saved the Israelites from the hand of the Egyptians.

Our text takes place a month after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. They Israelites were hungry and complained to Moses. **If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.** Just think about what they were saying for a second. They had spent years being oppressed—living as slaves in a foreign land. Twice God had rescued them from the Egyptians.

And yet, here they are saying that they would have rather lived in Egypt as slaves than walk in the wilderness. They weren't grateful that God saved them. They would have rather been killed by God in Egypt, than what they were going through in the desert. At least in Egypt they had food—plenty of food. And not just any food, but they had pots of meat to eat. Or course they had meat—they Egyptians understood you needed to feed slaves well in order to keep their energy up to do more hard work. But out in the wilderness, food was hard to come buy. And because they were so hungry they began to complain about God.

Like the Israelites, we may complain about God. We find all sorts of things to complain about. Sometimes we complain about what we don't have. We don't have enough in our minds. Or we don't have the right things. If only God would have blessed us with the same things has he gives everyone else. We complain that God isn't watching out of us. That he isn't protecting us. If only we could have such and such, then our lives would be so much better. And you would finally stop complaining and simply be content.

But getting more things isn't going to make you content. Especially if that is all you look at. Instead, as Christians we see the blessings that God gives us—whatever they are, as reminders. The gifts that God gives us are to remind us of the greater gifts that he has given us. He saved us from our sinful nature, from the pain and agony of hell. We were on our way to eternal damnation. We were slaves to sin, and we still would be had not Christ came and saved us. Just like he saved the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. We have been given salvation.

He did this by giving us his Son, who suffered and died for us. He took away the guilt of all our sins on the cross. And promises us eternal life with him in heaven forever. He has saved us—given us salvation. That is the greatest gift God has given us. And all the other gifts are to remind us of that great gift he gives us. The little gifts that God gives us daily serve as reminders of his grace.

So what do we have to complain about? What possible reason do we have to complain about the gifts that God gives us? We have no reason—for he has given us the greatest gift. He has given us his Son who suffered, died, and rose for us. And he has given us faith to receive all the rewards his Son offers.

Because the material gifts that God's gives us remind us of the spiritual gifts us also gives us, our material possessions also remind us of the gracious God that he is.

Despite God's grace in saving the Israelites, they still complained. And God heard them complain. Yet, he had Moses gather all of them together. And then he showed them a glimpse of his glory. God made sure that all the Israelites were able to see the glory of the Lord. And they heard his voice.

He told the Israelites through Moses, **At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread.** The meat God gave the Israelites was Quail, small birds—that I understand taste something in between chicken and duck. At least twice while they were in the wilderness God used a miracle to give the Israelites these birds. The bread that God promised the Israelites was eventually called manna. It appeared every morning, except on the Sabbath, with the dew. We don't know exactly what it was like. Moses describes it as **thin flakes like frost.** Elsewhere we are told that it was white like coriander seed, wafer-like and tasted of honey. Later, we learn that it tasted like something made with olive oil. When they first saw it, the Israelites didn't know what it was—so they called it manna, which means, "What is it."

But God gave it to them to eat, and they certainly had their fill—they had about two quarts per person, per day. So God blessed the Israelites when they complained about him. They complained that they had no meat as they did in Egypt, so God sent them quail. They complained that they were starving and that they at least had food to

fill them up in Egypt. So everyday God sent this special bread from heaven to completely satisfy the stomachs of his children. And why would God do this? Why would he give his grace to do those who complained about him? It was to remind the people of who he was and what he had done for them. God said that after they see it and eat and were satisfied, **Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.** The quail and the manna reminded the people of the one who gave it—the almighty, ever-gracious and giving God. It reminded them of the one who graciously saved them from the Egyptians.

When God gave the Israelites this manna he only gave them a few rules to go along with it. They were to take as much as they wanted, but not too much. They were to gather it each morning—only what they needed for that day. Except on Friday, when God would provide and the people were to take twice as much, for there wasn't to be any manna-picking on Saturday, the Sabbath. The only other rule was for the people not to keep any till morning. They were to trust in God to take care of them the next day. He promised that he would provide manna everyday, so there would be no reason from them to keep it. But at the end of our text, what do we see happening? Some kept manna until the next day. They didn't believe God's promise to take care of them. They decided to store some up for themselves. The manna turned bad and Moses got angry.

Manna was a great and gracious gift that God gave the people. They were able to do many different things with it. They could eat it raw. They boiled it or smashed it and baked it into cakes. And yet, we learn that eventually they began to despise this bread from heaven. Perhaps it was too much of a good thing. After all, they did eat it for over 40 years. They began to long for the spices and fruits and veggies they used to eat in Egypt. And they even said, **Now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!** Later **they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!”** But when they complained about manna, they weren't just complaining about manna. They were complaining about God. And worst of all, they were spurning his grace.

God doesn't give us manna today, but that doesn't mean we are without bread from heaven. In our gospel for today Jesus compares himself to manna. Jesus told a large crowd, **I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.** And later when they asked for some of this bread Jesus replied, **I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry.** We don't need manna. We have Christ. God has graciously given us Christ through the Word. Through faith we eat of the bread of life everyday. This is a far better gift than some coriander and honey-like bread. For this gifts gives us the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Do we treasure Christ as we should? Or do we treat this gift as the Israelites treated manna? Sure, some treasured it, at least at first. But others made up their own rules. They wanted to do with it what they wanted. Some people today want to add or subtract to God's Word. Or only talk about the parts that make them feel good about themselves, while skipping over sin or the so-called controversial doctrines. Sometimes we may act as if we don't appreciate this gift at all. Like the Israelites who longed for the food they ate in Egypt, we may long for what we ate when we were still unbelievers. We have been given Christ and his Word. But we often turn away from it to things of this world. They distract us and cause us to miss worship, to keep us from opening up the Bible, attending Bible class and so on. You are tempted to go back to your sinful ways before you were brought to faith. It is much more fun to do what you want to do than to follow God's Word.

In our second lesson for today, Paul addresses those who live like the Israelites. If we only live our lives concerned with the physical and mortal, we too will perish. If we concern ourselves with the worldly—pleasing our sinful nature, we will die eternally. Yet, some who know God, who have tasted his grace, choose the repulsive ways of the world for a few short moments of pleasure. They spurn God's grace. If we look only at the gifts and not the giver, we will die like the Israelites. If we fail to see that God is gracious and that he as given us all things than we won't join him in heaven forever.

But then we are reminded of our gracious God. He gave manna to a nation that complained about him. It reminded them of who God is and what has he done for them. For he saved them from the Egyptians and watched over them. He does the same for us. He gives us little reminders of his grace for us sinners. All the material blessings we enjoy are reminders of who is and what he has done. For he saved us from slavery to sin and eternal death through the work of his Son.

Like gifts from a husband to a wife—God gives us reminders of love. So next time you sit down for a meal, put on your clothes, sleep in your bed, talk on the phone, or use any other gifts that God has graciously given to you, remember that God hasn't just blessed you with the material, but the spiritual. For through them, he reminds us that he has given us more than we need to live both here on earth and forever with him. Amen.