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THERE IS ENOUGH FOR OUR NEED NOT OUR  
GREED – WILDERNESS SUNDAY

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Seasons of Creation – 3

September 20, 2020  
Anglican Parish of Raymond Terrace  
[www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org](http://www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org)

## SEASONS OF CREATION 3

Pray:

May I speak to you in the name of GOD – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen



Our Exodus reading finds the Israelite people coming into an area called the Desert of Sin. ^We need the previous 2 verses in order to give us some context for our discussion today. Chapter 15: <sup>27</sup> Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees; and they camped there by the water. ^Chapter 16: <sup>1</sup>The whole congregation of the Israelites set out from Elim; and Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. This dramatically sets the scene for this Wilderness Sunday as we continue our journey through the Seasons of Creation. Its barren surroundings provided the perfect place for GOD to test and shape the character of His people.

It happened again. As the Israelites encountered danger, shortages and inconvenience, they complained bitterly and longed to back in Egypt. But as always, GOD provided for their needs. Difficult circumstances often lead to stress; and complaining is a natural human response. The Israelites didn't really want to be back in Egypt; they just wanted life to get a little easier. In the pressure of the moment, they could not concentrate on the cause of their stress – in this case, their lack of trust in GOD. They could only think about the quickest way of escape. When pressure comes our way, we need to resist the temptation to make a quick escape. Instead, we need to focus on GOD's power and wisdom to help us deal with the cause of our stress.

GOD promised to meet the Hebrews need for food in the desert – but He also decided to test their obedience. GOD wanted to see if they would obey His detailed instructions. We can only learn to trust Him as our LORD by following Him. We can learn to obey by taking small steps of obedience.

Manna appeared on the ground each day as a thin flakes like frost. The people gathered it, ground it like grain, and made it into honey-tasting pancakes. For the Israelites, the manna was a gift – it came every day and was just what they needed. It satisfied their temporary physical need. In the Gospel of John, JESUS compares Himself to manna. He is our daily bread who satisfies our eternal, spiritual need.

The remainder of chapter 16 contains detailed instructions as to how they were to handle the manna they collected. The LORD commanded them to gather only as much as they **needed**.

<sup>17</sup>The Israelites did so, some gathering more, some less. <sup>18</sup>But when they measured it with an omer, those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage; they gathered as much as each of them **needed**.

Moses then told them that ‘Let no one leave any of it over until morning.’ But, of course, some of them paid no attention to this – only to find it full of maggots and

beginning to smell. Moses was angry with those who disobeyed GOD's instructions. There were new instructions on the sixth day – they could gather enough for 2 days because of the 7<sup>th</sup> day being the Sabbath. On this occasion, the manna remained in good condition because GOD did not send manna on the Sabbath Day. Each night the LORD sent as much meat as the Israelites needed because He heard their grumbling.

To those who don't believe in GOD, life on earth is all there is – and so it is natural for them to strive for the world's values such as money, popularity, power, pleasure, and prestige. For Paul, however, to live meant to develop eternal values and to tell others about CHRIST – who alone could help them see life from an eternal perspective. Paul's whole purpose in life was to speak out boldly for CHRIST and to become more like Him. Thus, Paul could confidently say that dying would be even better than living, because in death, he would be removed from worldly troubles, and He would see JESUS face-to-face. If we're not ready to die, then we're

not ready to live. We need to make certain of our eternal destiny; then we will be free to serve – devoting our lives to what really counts – without the fear of death.

▲ In our Gospel passage for today, JESUS further clarifies the membership rules of the Kingdom of Heaven – entrance is by grace alone. In this parable, GOD is the landowner and believers are the workers. The parable speaks especially to those who feel superior because of heritage or favoured position, to those who feel superior because they have spent so much time with JESUS, and to new believers as reassurance of GOD's grace. This parable is not about rewards but about salvation. It is a strong teaching about grace – GOD's generosity. We should never begrudge those who turn to GOD in the last moments of life, because, in reality NO-ONE deserves eternal life.

Many people we don't expect to see in the Kingdom will be there. The criminal who repented next to JESUS on the Cross will be there along with people who have believed and served GOD for many years. We must

never resent GOD's gracious acceptance of the despised, the outcast, and the sinners who have turned to Him for forgiveness. We should never be jealous of what GOD has given another person. Instead, we should focus on GOD's gracious benefits to us; and be thankful for what we have. This is a familiar parable of the workers in the vineyard who are all given the same wage, no matter how long they laboured. ^We need to acknowledge that in verse 11, those who had borne the heat of the day and laboured the longest – like the Israelites on the Exodus – grumbled against the landowner.



The Reverend Canon Dr Janet Trisk, a priest in South Africa puts it this way:

It's easy to dismiss such people as ungrateful wretches. GOD has brought them out of slavery in Egypt and is taking them to the Promised Land. These ancient grumblings haven't changed much over the years. There's always something we can grumble about – water

restrictions, not enough money, too much traffic, those in positions of leadership whose decisions can affect the lives of thousands and thousands of people. Sometimes it's hard to take the long view if you are cold or hungry or ill or fearful. Notice how GOD responds to the Israelites – He sends food – quails in the evening and manna in the morning. GOD's concern is for the hungry and for those whose immediate needs are being ignored by those in power.

While good work and creativity is a characteristic of GOD, slave labour is not. The Sabbath rest is a fundamental principle.

The lesson in the wilderness is this – SHARE. Be generous. The mentality of Egypt and the landowner is to grab power and consolidate it. The mentality of GOD is generosity. This is the example for all GOD's people. Fair treatment is imposed from the outside by the wealthy landowner. Each worker gets the same daily wage. But this is because he imposes this "equality" on the workers.



It is in freedom from oppression that we can learn to relate fairly to one another.

What the Israelites – and by extension, us – still have to learn is that there is enough. But in order for there to be enough we have to share. And whatever we hoard goes bad. In this Season of Creation, it is easy to fall into despondency – we are all doomed – the earth and its creatures. However, the promise from our story today is that even in the wilderness, there is enough – IF ONLY we will take just what we need and no more.



May we pray:

In every age, O GOD, you have called forth men and women to spread the good news of salvation. Instil in us the virtue of charity for the well-being of all our brothers and sisters, that they might come to know your kindness and rejoice in the salvation you have promised. This we pray in the name of JESUS. Amen



Life Application Study Bible

<http://sustainable-preaching.org/2020/09/20/16th-sunday-after-pentecost-season-of-creation-3/> Date accessed 19/09/2020

Daily Prayer 2020