

“Food Fits: When Bread Just Isn’t Enough!”

Numbers 11:1-35

February 7, 2021

Last week Denise and I had a visit from a sweet young neighbor couple who brought their five-week-old baby over for us to see. They are good, good parents, but they are experiencing the frustrations that come with a nocturnal newborn—awake all night and sleeping all day! Young father told us after he had been up most of the night with the baby, he just looked at her and said, “After being up with you for five hours, the least you could do is give me a smile!” When you think about it, babies are ingrates! We give them a pass because they are cute and can’t appreciate all that’s been done for them. They get hungry and cry; they get tired and fuss, they poop and cry; they get uncomfortable and fuss. We expect whining from babies. But adults? Whining and the ingratitude signified by that whining is ugly and unbecoming. Who wants to be around people who moan and groan and pout and always want to see themselves as victims? But ingratitude isn’t just ugly. It’s dangerous. It is dangerous because, it is also very contagious. And in adults who know they have been rescued and redeemed by Jesus it is unconscionable and all too common. New series: Road Rage

How Ingratitude Steals Our Joy and Makes Our Lives Miserable

**A study of Numbers 11-21 wilderness wandering
Don’t worry about tracking in Chron. Bible**

Numbers 11:1–3 (NASB95)

¹ Now the people became like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of the LORD; and when the LORD heard *it*, His anger was kindled, and the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed *some* of the outskirts of the camp. ² The people therefore cried out to Moses, and Moses prayed to the LORD and the fire died out. ³ So the name of that place was called Taberah, because the fire of the LORD burned among them.

What we just read is a template we will see again and again. First comes grumbling, then comes judgment; then a memorial name is attached to the site of the sin. In this case Taberah. But the fact that this pattern occurs over and over again in both Exodus and here in Numbers begs a question:

How did a journey that should have taken just 11 days turn into a disastrous forty-year detour in the wilderness? In a word, ingratitude! True, those of you who know the story of the children of Israel are aware it was a lack of trust—unbelief—that doomed them to wander in the desert for an entire generation. But fear and discouragement,

and the unbelief that produced them didn't just spring up without a back-story! And this is what makes it all so sad as well as instructive. What is the back-story? After 430 years of slavery

Miraculous deliverance of God

Stranglehold of their slavery broken (Ex. 7-12)

Visible guidance by cloud and fire (Ex. 13:21)

Pharaoh and his army destroyed (Ex. 14:30, 31)

And how did the people respond? They sang a song of worship and started grumbling!

(Exodus 15:1-16:12) worship/whining

Before we shake our heads in disgust and amazement at how quickly these ancient Israelites pivoted from praise to self-pity, consider the number of times we ourselves have failed to navigate the difficult circumstances of life in the light of God's grace. Don't many of us, just like these ancient people, all too easily lapse into patterns of thinking in which we convince ourselves we are victims, that God has forgotten us, or that life with God is more demanding than life without Him? Don't we, through our petty grievances and endless complaints, reveal an underlying "heart disease"—an ingratitude unbecoming of people who owe their very lives to God? (Old style black gospel song: "If the Lord Never did anything else for me, He's already done

enough!” “He’s Done Enough” (Beverly Crawford)

Bear in mind, after their initial fits over bitter water and lack of food (Exodus 15:22-16:21), these recently rescued Israelites experienced additional manifestations of God’s presence—manifestations which should have left no shadow of a doubt that He was with them in that desert. Just think about it. In an epiphany of fire and smoke, the audible voice of God at Mount Sinai was so overwhelming the people essentially asked Moses to take a message for them! And he did. This is the place they became a newly-formed nation and where they received from God their own “constitution”—the covenant God made with them, which included the Ten Commandments. All this rich history of God’s faithfulness; and again, how do the people respond? They grumble and complain and whine and rebel and challenge their leaders. In one ugly scene of ingratitude after another, people who had received stunning visible manifestations of God’s saving work on their behalf managed to conclusively prove to the world once and for all that seeing is *not* believing! If it were, the children of Israel would have trekked over the desert dunes right on into the Promised Land. But they didn’t.

Are we any better though? Don't we, with every fit of rage over something we have to endure, do without, or suffer, send a not-so-subtle signal that God owes us something beyond what He has already done for us? With every setback that puts us in a sullen, self-pitying mood, we demonstrate by our attitude that we think we deserve better treatment from God! With every murmur of discontentment, we are throwing a tantrum and saying, "God, make my life a bowl of cherries without the pits and I will trust You" (as if we can set the terms and conditions for belief)!

Can we honestly say, without an ounce of irony or hubris, that if we received the same visible manifestations of God's presence the ancient Israelites did, we would have exhibited more gratitude? Really? Do you think our lives—enriched by much more revelation from God than existed in Moses' time—bear this out? All these former things were recorded for our example (1 Corinthians 10:1-12).

Numbers 11:4–6 (NASB95)

⁴ The rabble who were among them had greedy desires; and also the sons of Israel wept again and

said, “Who will give us meat to eat? ⁵ “We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic, ⁶ but now our appetite is gone. There is nothing at all to look at except this manna.”

Give us this day our daily bread, but throw in a filet mignon while you are at it! According to Deuteronomy 8:3, it was God Himself who allowed His people to become hungry and who then fed them with manna as part of a test.
(Moses)

Deuteronomy 8:3 (NASB95)

³ “He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.

(Jesus quoted in wilderness 1,500 years later) So it was a test, and sadly, they failed the test. The only way to pass the test was to trust, but this was an occasion of murmuring.

God tests us not to defeat us, but to show us our true need.

And now notice how they got so nostalgic for Egypt. How could this be? In Egypt they were enslaved. In the desert they are free. Do you think freedom was too much for these Hebrews? The government of Egypt had been telling them what children they could bear, when to work, when to eat, when to make the bricks of mud and straw. Freedom isn't easy. There are plenty of people who believe the state is a suitable replacement for God and the freedom he gives. I couldn't disagree more.

But notice that last sentence...

There is nothing at all to look at except this manna.

The manna just isn't enough for us.

And at this point there is a Moses meltdown.

Numbers 11:11–13 (NASB95)

¹¹ So Moses said to the LORD, “Why have You been so hard on Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all this people on me? ¹² “Was it I who conceived all this people? Was it I who brought them forth, that You should say to me, ‘Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries a nursing infant, to the land which You swore to their fathers’? ¹³ “Where am I to get meat to give

to all this people? For they weep before me, saying, ‘Give us meat that we may eat!’

Verse 15—Just kill me! Elijah, Jeremiah, Jonah Love what God does—seventy more elders—not judges, not administrators—Mo already had that. Just people who could show poor discouraged Moses that he wasn’t alone. Leaders need this! God is always gracious to give us what we need when we need it!

But back to the people: For the people, the manna just wasn’t enough. (Petr Latvia home mtg. in the snow—so grateful with so little)

Fast forward some 1,500 years later:

John chapter 6 (don’t turn there)—There is another multitude of people—Philip is concerned and says to Jesus, how are we going to feed this great crowd—two hundred denarii couldn’t buy enough bread—with Jesus there is no melt down. He feeds the people miraculously and they follow him because the appetites are satisfied. They even want to make him king for all the wrong reasons. And then Jesus says it:

John 6:35 (NASB95)

³⁵ Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who

believes in Me will never thirst.

And do you know what? The murmuring cont.

John 6:41 (NASB95)

⁴¹ Therefore the Jews were grumbling about Him, because He said, “I am the bread that came down out of heaven.”

Perhaps we might expect the Jewish leaders and authorities to grumble or murmur. Jesus was a threat to their rabbinic interpretations of the Law. But even His own followers, some of His own disciples, grumbled about what He was teaching (John 6:61). And what was He teaching? You must eat my flesh and drink my blood if you want eternal life. My life must become your life. You must die to let me live through you.

John 6:48–51 (NASB95)

⁴⁸ “I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ “Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰ “This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹ “I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and

the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.”

God is gracious to give us his only Son.