

“Bread from Heaven”

Numbers 21:4-9

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What was the worthless food that they loathed? It was manna: Bread from Heaven. One of the real problems for Moses was that he was leading more than a million people who had nothing to do but to sit around and think and talk to one another.

Manna, their food, showed up on their doorstep every morning – except on the Sabbath, so God sent a double portion on Friday. All that they had to do was take two steps outside and pick it up off the ground. When they needed water, God would provide it. For 40 years, God did not allow their clothes or their sandals to wear out. God gave them everything that they needed.

What the Israelites really needed was someone like my sister

Monica in their camp. One of Monica's favorite phrases is: "If you are not a part of the solution, then you are part of the problem." Subtlety is not her strong suit. I say that as a loving brother.

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Instead of going to Moses, the Israelites went into each other's tents and said, "Moses doesn't care about us. He doesn't care if we die in this wilderness. I bet he has water. I bet he has real bread and doesn't have to eat this manna."

And they sit and stew about it for a while, until it they get so mad that they lash out at Moses and at God Himself.

We look at our lives and see that Satan hasn't changed his way of doing business. You may see this same thing in the place that you work. You may see this in our community; among family, friends, even members of the church. There are those who would rather sit and stew about things than go and talk to one other.

Or instead of going to the person with whom we have the problem, there is the tendency to talk to everyone else and tell them how wrong we think that person is. Therefore, Satan leads us into becoming part of the problem. And through our actions, or our lack of action, we increase the problem, make it more difficult to solve the problem, and cause a lack of forgiveness to abound.

This is why the understanding of living under the grace of Baptism is so important in the life of a Christian. You are one of God's children now. You have been washed clean of all guilt and blame that comes with being born a sinful human being.

We look at an infant baptized child. He or she is completely clean in God's eyes, and in that child's heart, there are not any grudges held, any malice, any contempt for anyone. One may get fussy now and then when there is hunger or the need to be changed, but that is only their way of telling you what is needed. No child holds a grudge against the person changing his diaper.

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The Israelites in the wilderness didn't have to work for a living. They had everything given to them on their doorstep, and they grumbled, held grudges, were envious of others, and felt great contempt for Moses and God Himself. This was because they did not understand or appreciate God's mercy and forgiveness.

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When you refuse to talk to someone who has offended you and choose to sit and stew about it instead, or when you refuse to forgive someone who has apologized for offending you in some way, then you might as well cry out with the Israelites, “and we loathe this worthless food.” Because that is the same thing that God's detractors said in Jesus day and throughout the history of the Christian church.

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