

Sunday, September 24, 2017

Exodus 16:2-15

Matthew 20:1-16

### Trusting that God Will Provide

The torrential rain was unrelenting, and the town was evacuated when it became clear the dam couldn't hold back the waters for much longer. As flood waters rise, a very religious woman put all her faith in God and won't leave her house. She says to all, "God will take care of me." When local authorities come by in 4-wheel drive vehicles, going house to house, telling everyone to get out and rescuing those who need it, she says "God will provide," and refuses to leave. Later, as the waters have risen significantly and surround the homes, the authorities come back in a boat. Again, they offer to rescue her. "God will provide!" she says, shooing them away. Finally, the water floods her whole house, so she climbs onto the roof. A rescue helicopter comes by, but again, she refuses to get on, saying "God will provide."

Sadly, the woman is drowned in the flood and, when she gets up to heaven, she complains to God, "I had faith in you! I thought you would save me!" "What are you talking about?" God says. "I sent you a Jeep, a boat, and a helicopter!"

In recent weeks we have seen similar scenes. Many people want to stay within their homes and not wanting to hear the warning to leave or evacuate before the storm. Then once the storm hits, they look to be saved. Often we have seen rescue workers go beyond what is necessary and save these people. And it is these people that save others God calls to serve.

But not always are those who need rescuing drowning in flood waters or combatting fires, they are often need help due to grief and mourning or because they need to share their stories with the hope of getting help and a new outlook on life. It is in these situations God does provide others to assist, aid and help. God does provide.

As we continue to look at the journey of the Hebrew people we encounter them about two months into their trip to the Promised Land. They are in the Desert of Sin and it is there that the whole community grumbles against Moses and Aaron. "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. You've brought us out into this desert to starve to death.

God heard the grumbling and told Moses. I will rain down bread from heaven. He gave strict instructions of how they were to gather it—daily and just enough for that day. On the 6<sup>th</sup> day they are to gather enough for two days. God also told Moses that each evening they will be

given meat in the form of quail. So God provided what the people needed to eat in order to live and move each day. Because God heard their cry for help, he responded and answered their needs.

Sometimes we speak about things we don't know about or have control over or have no say. When this occurs what do we do? What do we say?

Peter was speaking to Jesus one day and stated, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?" Jesus' response was that when all things become new, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you 12 will be able to sit on your thrones and every one of you will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit the best gift—eternal life. To further explain this he told the parable of the workers in the vineyard.

The parable is of the landowner who goes out early in the morning to hire men to work in the vineyard during harvest season. He agrees to pay them a denarius for the day and they go and work. About 9 am he does the same- hiring more workers for the harvest of grapes. The landowner goes back to the marketplace again and hires more people at the 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> and even he 11<sup>th</sup> hour. There were people standing around all day and in need of work. So he hires them as well.

When evening came the foreman was called to the owner's office. He was told to pay the workers their wages for the day beginning with the last hired. Those hired last received the denarius. And those who had been hired first and worked all day thought that they would get more. Yet the landowner said no, for they had agreed to the denarius for the day. They complained against the landowner whose response was simply that they had agreed to the deal. It is up to me how much I want to pay any of the workers. I have the right to do what I want with my own money. Or are you envious because I am generous?

One can imagine the attitude of the workers first hired for the day. It wasn't fair—or was it? They had agreed to the set wage and worked hard all day. Those being hired throughout the day had little to no hope of making any money and yet they earned money too. But what really is at issue here is the generosity of the landowner. What does he demonstrate to these workers- that he is rich, that he is in control and that it is up to him what gets paid and how much. God is generous and giving. How generous are you? Maybe you have even found yourself envious because someone else was generous and gave to others what you could not.

God calls us to give of ourselves- yes, but to also look after our needs as well. God says be generous but don't put yourself in situations where you are in need of assistance. God calls us to be generous but only if we can manage this within our household/ family's needs.

Just how generous is God and what does he hope we can do as we give to others in His name. How generous is God when we look at the bigger picture of the needs of many others. God wants you to use some of your money to help people in need. God didn't put us on this earth to live for ourselves. He blesses us so that we can bless others. This is all part of God making us more like himself. Everything we have in life is because of God's generosity. We wouldn't have anything, we wouldn't even be alive, if it weren't for God's generosity. And God wants us to be generous like he is. But it takes time to share with others and learn how to do so without counting the cost.

There is an old rabbinic parable about a farmer that had two sons. As soon as they were old enough to walk, he took them to the fields and he taught them everything that he knew about growing crops and raising animals. When he got too old to work, the two boys took over the chores of the farm and when the father died, they had found their working together so meaningful that they decided to keep their partnership. So each brother contributed what he could and during every harvest season, they would divide equally what they had corporately produced. Across the years the elder brother never married, stayed an old bachelor. The younger brother did marry and had eight wonderful children. Some years later when they were having a wonderful harvest, the old bachelor brother thought to himself one night, "My brother has ten mouths to feed. I only have one. He really needs more of his harvest than I do, but I know he is much too fair to renegotiate. I know what I'll do. In the dead of the night when he is already asleep, I'll take some of what I have put in my barn and I'll slip it over into his barn to help him feed his children.

At the very time he was thinking down that line, the younger brother was thinking to himself, "God has given me these wonderful children. My brother hasn't been so fortunate. He really needs more of this harvest for his old age than I do, but I know him. He's much too fair. He'll never renegotiate. I know what I'll do. In the dead of the night when he's asleep, I'll take some of what I've put in my barn and slip it over into his barn." And so one night when the moon was full, as you may have already anticipated, those two brothers came face to face, each on a mission of generosity.

The old rabbi said that there wasn't a cloud in the sky, a gentle rain began to fall. You know what it was? God weeping for joy because two of his children had gotten the point. Two of his children had come to realize that generosity is the deepest characteristic of the holy and because we are made in God's image, our being generous is the secret to our joy as well. Life is not fair, thank God! It's not fair because it's rooted in grace and the trust that we need to have knowing that God will provide.

LET US PRAY:

holy God we praise you and rejoice that you love us and call us to be your faithful people. Help us to be generous with the blessings we receive from you. Enable us to grow in grace and have hope. Thank you. God. Amen.