**Exodus 16:1-30**

**Rest in God's Provision**

**Sermon final**

**We are currently in our series, "Rest for the Restless". Last week we learned that "rest" is meant to be something that we find delight and enjoyment in when we find it in God. This morning we learn that "rest" can only come as we trust in God's provision. All of us RIGHT NOW are waiting on God to provide something: finances, answer to prayer, peace in conflict, the salvation of a loved one, a future spouse, healing from illness, "God please provide _____."**

**This sermon is going to be less exegetical this morning and far more practical – because this passage is SUPER practical and applicable to us. This morning I am going to drop several "truth bombs" on all of us…remember I preach this to myself before I preach it to you. Pay attention to the screen as these truths come up. Here is the main "truth bomb" for us this morning:**

**True rest can only come as we trust in God's loving and able provision (read together and emphasize "loving" and "able")**

I'll never forget one Christmas eve, laying in my aunt's attic looking up at the ceiling – thinking about a blue GT bike I had asked for. It was sure to come – my parents knew it was THE ONLY thing I really wanted. In the morning, there it was. I loved that bike and I read it everywhere…until one day someone stole it out in front of my friend's house. I asked, I waited, it came, it was taken away…not many years later I got my first car, and I could care less about the GT bike***. Father knows best and is able! We will only rest when we trust in God's LOVING and ABLE provision. I want to consider these two words "loving" and "able" provision.***

**"Loving":** God gives or withholds or takes away. What do we do when God withholds provision….we cry out to Him! When God withholds it is loving…here is a truth bomb not on the screen: "By withholding provision, God is calling you to HIMSELF, and in calling you to HIMSELF God is calling you to JOY!" His withholding and taking away provision is always BEST – HE LOVES US. Some of us don't trust this and we are plagued with anxiety. "I know God is able, but I don't know if He's willing" and what we mean is "willing to do what I WANT or think is best" – We have to trust God loves us and FATHER knows best. A child in a store begs for a toy on the lower shelf…all the while the Father is saving his money to purchase the bigger toy on the upper shelf for Christmas.

God loves all His creatures, but the Bible is clear that He has a special, steadfast, unique, covenant love for His people. He provides just enough for them. He withholds just enough for

them. He takes away when appropriate. His provision and His withholding are in accordance with His greater provision for you which is to be conformed into the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29)…to this end He is "working all things together for good" (Rom. 8:28). ***If you don't trust that God loves you and will always provide what is best you will fail to rest and you will live in anxiety and fear.***

**"Able":** Nothing hinders God from providing or withholding the provision we are longing for. God is in TOTAL control. God created all things and is not removed from His creation, He sustains, nourishes, and cares for everything intimately and actively – even down to the least sparrow that falls and to the hairs on our heads (**Mt. 10:29-30**). In our story, God knew the people were hungry, and was about to provide for their needs. **Acts 17:28** – "in Him we live and move and have our being". There is no such thing as chance, randomness, coincidence or "serendipity" – when the quail was there in the evening, and the manna was there in the morning – God put it there. Even the heart, nature, will of man is moved and directed by God ULTIMATELY. He allows for us to make choices, and yet He is sovereign over our choices and steers it all for the good of His ultimate plan. God is in the heaven's, He does whatever He pleases (**Ps. 115:13**).

Some of us think provision is something WE ultimately bring about or that we cause to be withheld. Scripture clearly teaches that we provide! The man who doesn't work, doesn't eat (**2 Thess. 3:10**). We play a part because ***God uses instruments*** – the sun, the rain, the wind, our choices for obedience or disobedience – but God can stop the sun for Joshua (**10:13**), slow it down for Hezekiah (**1 Kn.20:11**), withhold rain for Elijah (**1 Kn.17:1-7**), rain manna for a grumbling people (**Ex.16:13-14**), use the wind to provide quail (**Num. 11:31**), and move the heart of Cyrus to bring His people back from their punishment (**Isa.45**). God uses His instruments of creation, and, ULTIMATELY, He determines all things and nothing can happen apart from His design. God even used the evil intentions of man to crucify the Son of God so that He could provide salvation for the sins of the world (**Ac.2:23**).

If we don't trust that GOD is ABLE and ULTIMATELY the one who provides, withholds, takes away…we will fixate on ourselves as the ultimate cause for provision or lack thereof.

The Word "pro-vision" means "to see before". You and I must trust that God ***"sees before"*** and is ***loving and able*** to provide for the future or we will never rest in the present. Israel in our story had hard hearts, they grumbled and complained, they disobeyed God, because they did not trust that God ***loved them*** and was ***able*** to provide for their needs and they failed to enter His rest***. A key passage that summarizes this generation in the wilderness is*** **Psalm 95:10-11**: "**they do not know my ways"…** "**they shall not enter my rest". (Ps. 95:10-11**). **Here is a truth bomb**:

**You will never rest and obey God *in the present* unless you first know God and trust Him with *your future***

Israel in our story has been redeemed from Egypt, and they are journeying to the promised land. God is leading them through Moses. God's presence with His people at this point in history is in a cloud shaped as a pillar. Here in **v.23** is the first mention of Sabbath observance. God commands the people to gather twice as much on the sixth day, and rest on the seventh day. At Sinai, this seventh day will become the 4th commandment for Israel to remember and observe. God has yet to give them the law, but the people are learning to rest as God's children. The text tells us that God is ***testing*** them (**v.4**) – He wants to build within them obedience and trust and to teach them to rest in Him. But ultimately, the people fail to enter God's rest because they fail to trust in the provision of God and to obey His commands.

**Grumbling is the theme in this portion of Scripture.** In Exodus 15 and 17 the people grumble for water and God in both passages provides. Here in Exodus 16 the people are hungry…God has brought them to a barren place …and they grumble. God provides "What is it"? That's what "manna" means…they had no idea what the provision of God was so they called it "What is it"? ***Don't despise days of barrenness when God has yet to provide***. **Here is another truth bomb:**

**God's blessings and provision often *begin* where our resources and planning *ends***

However, they fail to enter God's rest…because they did not know God or trust in His loving and able provision. This is a story of what NOT to do. What lessons can we learn from Israel in the wilderness?

1. **They failed to know God's ways**

We love to microwave food because we're always in a hurry. ***Problem: growth in Jesus isn't microwaveable.*** "Can't you just get us through the desert quickly God?!" The direction that God leads Israel through the wilderness doesn't make much sense, unless God is trying to teach them some lessons along the way.

**God provides multiple things, in multiple ways, overtime**

We are short-sighted – we only see what's in front of us. God "***sees before***"…He sees in front of us, within us, around us, and into the future. He not only wants to provide food, but faith, as well as "***love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (*Gal.5:22-23**). He provides much more than food! In **v.3** the people want to go back to slavery and meat pots. God wants to bring them manna from heaven and into a land of rest. You can survive on pop tarts because they are fast and easy, but you won't grow or rest well – ***learning to rest in God's provision takes TIME and TRIALS***.

We read in **v.4** that the Lord is using this situation to "test" the people – ***"I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, <u>that I may test them</u>, whether they will walk in my law or not."*** This does not mean that God wanted to "see what they would do", rather, God wants the people to learn a lesson here and He uses their story to teach us a lesson today. Sadly, they didn't learn the lesson, "***they have not known my ways"… "they shall not enter my rest" (Ps.95:10-11)***

**They had already learned some lessons from God: remember when God backed them up against the Red Sea?** No exit plan – a mountain to the right, a mountain to the left, a massive sea behind them…Pharaoh and his army coming in front of them. NOT ONE PERSON said, "it's ok! God is going to provide a way out by splitting this giant sea behind us and we'll walk right through!" But they DID have God's promise – "I'm going to redeem you from Egypt and bring you into the land". God *often* doesn't show us the pathway until we're backed up against the Sea with no way out! **Here's another truth bomb:**

**A closed door is often a glorious opportunity for God to demonstrate his loving and able provision**

"I am about to rain bread from Heaven for you! I am about to cause you to grow!". The test came – "gather the bread each day…but on the sixth day there will be twice as much…on the seventh day DO NOTHING!" It happened just as God said, they each had just enough – "***whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat" (v.18)*** This is a big test for farmers: work, work, work, then…DO NOTHING? This is what God brought into creation – HE created work, work, work, then rest (**Gen. 2:1-3**). Ultimately, He is going to teach them who He is. ***V.6 – "you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt"… v.7 – "you shall see the glory of the Lord" … v.12 – "in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God."*** God cares deeply that you will find your rest in Him…so much, that He will allow you to go without and wait for His loving and able provision. He closes doors, to open better ones. He withholds reconciliation with others, to provide a greater and more lasting peace in Him. He tells us, "wait!", when we pray, because He has something so much better in store on the upper shelf. This is the "way" God works. They did NOT know God's ways…they did NOT enter into rest.

**Remember Jesus and the disciples – they have 5,000 plus people with them**. They're hungry. I love what Jesus says to Philip, "Hey Phil…. ***'Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?'" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. (Jn. 6:5-6).*** They ended up with MORE than enough. More than enough! That's how God provides…Israel needed to learn this, Jesus' disciples needed to learn this, you and I need to learn this as well. But ISRAEL failed to know God's ways.

2. **They grumbled against God's appointed leadership**

This generation of Israel is described throughout Scripture as a **"*stiff-necked people*" (Ex.32:9; Ac.7:51).** Stephen in the book of Acts gives commentary on the rejection of Moses' leadership in the wilderness. He says they rejected Moses **"*saying who made you a ruler and a judge*?"** but Stephen notes that **"*God sent [Moses] as both ruler and redeemer*" (Ac.7:35) …** but that the people **"*refused to obey him but thrust him aside, and in their heart's they turned to Egypt*" (Ac.7:39).**

Notice in **v.2** that the people's stomachs were grumbling, so **"*the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron*".** Can you imagine millions of people all angry with you! Talk about leadership issues! But **v.8** tells us what is really going on – Moses says to the people, **"*what are we? Your grumbling is not against us but against the Lord*."** Moses consistently in this passage tells the people, **"*God has heard your grumbling*" (v.7,8,9)…**they grumbled against Moses, but in doing so they were really grumbling against God, because God was the provider, not Moses, and God had appointed Moses as their leader.

There are some important lessons for leadership and for submission here: *First*, ***leaders must have thick skin.*** You will have people who will grumble against the decisions that you are making…it will happen. The way forward is not to stop caring what people think…you care because you love people…but you have to pray for God to give you thick skin while maintaining a soft heart. *Second,* ***if God has appointed you…LEAD.*** Don't abdicate your role because it's difficult. Moses and Aaron knew it was God who appointed them. When people complain about your leadership you can tell them, "you need to take that up with God". *Third,* ***grumbling against leadership only creates unrest and anxiety.*** Anxiety spreads to others and to the leaders over you. ***If they aren't your leader, stop following, but if God has appointed them, stop grumbling – you are only grumbling against God***. The writer of **Hebrews in 13:17** tells the church to "***obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with JOY and not WITH GROANING*."** *Finally*, ***leaders must be willing to lay down their lives.*** Leaders lay down their lives for those they lead…even stiff-necked Israelites. Leadership is selfless and sacrificial. It takes everything within you to lead and those you lead don't always follow as you would want them to. Not only were the people learning to walk with God, Moses was learning to lead on behalf of God. Again, God was providing multiple things in this story. The people didn't rest because they grumbled against God's appointed leaders.

3. **They failed to rest, but God remained faithful**

One of our family's favorite cartoons is Beauty and the Beast. There is a scene when the Beast is trying to get Belle to come to dinner and they are arguing back and forth through the

door and finally he says, “FINE…THEN YOU CAN JUST STARVE! If she doesn’t eat with me…she doesn’t eat!” What’s amazing to me is that God STILL provides for their need! In **v.20** they store manna up for the morning (which is exactly what Moses told them NOT to do) and in the morning it’s infested with maggots! God wants to “***give us our DAILY bread” (Mt. 6:11***). I’m not saying saving is bad…but it can quickly become idolatry if we aren’t careful, especially if we aren’t conduits of God’s blessing to others. Then in **v.27** when God prescribes a day of rest with Him they still go out to gather, “***but they found none.” Some of you may be trying to find rest in places where there is none. It’s not there!***

**You can work, work, work, without God but you will never be at rest with God**

**Overworking is celebrated in our culture**…it’s a sheer path to burn out, collapse, and devastation in your relationships – most importantly your relationship with God. We worship work and worship hard workers! God WANTS us to work hard, but 60 plus hours a week, no time for God, no time for family…and we celebrate it, “look how hard they work! They’re such good providers!” God doesn’t view it that way! It can become for some a great source of pride when they boast, “I’m a good provider. I’ve got this!” For some people working hard is a way to escape family and relationship with God. Much easier to plug away at my desk or with my hammer where everything is manageable. Many people look back on their childhood and say, “My dad worked really hard to provide…but I never really knew him personally.” God is trying to give us a blessing when He commands that we come to Him and set aside time to rest…He wants for them time with family, time in community with God’s people, most importantly TIME WITH HIM. DO YOU TRULY BELIEVE IN GOD’S LOVING AND ABLE PROVISION?

They grumble…But God ***still provides*** for them bread. God is faithful, not PRIMARILY because of them. He is faithful PRIMARILY for the sake of His name and for the sake of His glory. Most importantly, God is writing a bigger story than Israel and He wants to be faithful to that story. **Israel will not ruin the story and neither will you!**

**The bigger story is that Jesus comes as the fulfillment of the Exodus and as the fulfillment of our Sabbath rest**. Paul tells us Jesus is the rock in the wilderness that provides spiritual water (**1 Cor. 10:1-6**). In **John 6** we learn that Jesus is the manna from Heaven that provides for our spiritual needs (**Jn. 6:35**). In **John 3** we learn that as the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, so Jesus must be lifted up that all men can look upon Him and be saved (**Jn.3:15-16**). In **2 Corinthians 3-4** Jesus is the glory of God that is greater than the glory revealed to Moses and the people in the wilderness. So in all of this, we are meant to learn to rest in God’s provision, AND we are meant to see the bigger provision of God in Jesus Christ, the rock, the manna, the cross of salvation that is lifted up, and the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Now Moses failed to enter in as well. He was a flawed leader. He finally lost his cool (who can blame him?) and instead of speaking to the rock as God told him to, he struck the rock and God told him he couldn't enter in. He misrepresented God – ***misrepresenting God is SURE way to lose rest as a leader.*** But Jesus Christ is the greater Moses! He is a greater leader, and He is faithful to provide even when we are faithless. Listen to what the writer of Hebrews says about Jesus and Moses:

> **Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, [2] who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. (Hebrews 3:1-2)**

**Moses was faithful to God who appointed Him, but he eventually failed. Jesus is also faithful to Him who appointed Him! Jesus has been appointed to you as your leader by the Father. His task is to get you to the land of rest. His faithfulness is not dependent upon YOU, not primarily…His faithfulness is dependent on His faithfulness to the Father! How faithful do you think Jesus is to the Father?**

**Do you ever doubt that God will provide "eternal life" in Heaven? How faithful is Jesus to Him who appointed Him? Do you ever doubt that God will forgive you of your sins? How faithful is Jesus to Him who appointed Him? Do you ever doubt that God's promises will come to pass for you? How faithful is Jesus to Him who appointed Him? Do you doubt that in your dying moments, or in your worst sickness, or in your darkest trials God will provide the grace to make it through? How faithful is Jesus to Him who appointed Him?**

**He is a faithful leader, and His faithfulness to provide is NOT dependent upon you…it's dependent upon His faithfulness to the one who appointed Him! That's very very good news.**

**But this is only true for those who have through faith received Jesus as their Savior and leader – as the one appointed to them. Our leader has gone ahead of us: He lived a perfect sinless life, and died on the cross for our sins as our advocate. He rose again proving He accomplished the appointed task perfectly. He is seated in victory at the right hand of God and He intercedes for you as your advocate – He keeps His task appointed by the Father perfectly! You can rest that your advocate has made the way open for you…God's promises are given to you, God's provision never withheld, God's covenant love for you is unconditional. Your inheritance in heaven – secure.**

**Maybe you're here, but Jesus is not yet your advocate…you can rest in Him as your advocate by simply putting your faith in Him and telling Him… "I will follow your lead through life. Rescue me from Egypt - save me from my sins. Bring me to the land of rest and blessing. I choose this morning to turn from Egypt…from my former life…and I choose to follow you, my**

**leader, my Captain. Jesus cannot lead you unless you first become a follower. Jesus will not provide for you unless you trust in Him to be your provision and your Savior."**

**Jesus said, "I am the way the truth and the life no one comes to the Father BUT THROUGH ME." (Jn.14:6) The apostles said, "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given [provided] among men by which we must be saved." (Ac.4:12) As we pray, you can make that decision to follow Jesus today.**

**Pray**

**<u>Connection Group Questions</u>**

1. **In what way(s) is rest connected to God's provision?**
2. **When was a time when you were seeking God's provision? How did God provide? Was it in the way you expected?**
3. **Read Exodus 16:1-30 – What are some reasons that Israel disobeyed God in this passage?**
4. ***True rest can only come as we trust in God's <u>loving</u> and <u>able</u> provision* – do you struggle more with the "able" provision of God or the "loving" provision of God?**
5. **Read Psalm 95:7-11 – this is a commentary on the people grumbling in the wilderness. What are some reasons they failed to enter into God's rest in this passage?**
6. **Read Exodus 16:4 – God is testing them. Can you recall a time when God tested/built your trust in Him? What lessons did you learn?**
7. **What is an area of provision you are in need of right now? Share it with the group. For the group – share some possible ways God could be providing MORE.**
8. **Hebrews 13:17 – what are some areas of leadership that God has established in each of our lives? What do leaders do when those they lead grumble against them?**
9. **Read Hebrews 3:1-2 – Who appointed Moses to his task of leadership? Who is the greater leader than Moses? Who appointed Jesus to His task and why can we be confident that Jesus will always provide what is needed?**