

Bread of Heaven for Grumbling Israel:

Exodus 16:2-4;14,15

In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. 3 The Israelites said to them, “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, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.” 4 Then the Lord said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.

14 When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. 15 When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat.”

To segue into our sermon, I would like to start by introducing you to a new word.

The word is **Portmanteau**.

It’s a cool, contemporary word used these days.

It’s a word that is formed by combining two different terms to create a new entity.

To give you some examples:

Breakfast + Lunch = ????????

Brunch

Internet = ??????????? + Network

Internet = International + Network

Korean + English = ????????

Korean + English = Konglish

Cellfish = Cellphone + ???????
 Cellfish = Cellphone + Selfish

Manwich
 Man + Sandwich

This is what guys make from leftovers in their refrigerators. This is what I made before I got married.

Brangelina
 Brad Pitt + Angelina Jolie

Did you know about a month ago, my wife Chloe made a Portmanteau with our names: Chloe and Joshua

Chloe + Joshua =
 Chloshua

Maybe you saw a commercial of a hungry person who got annoyed so they gave that person a chocolate bar.

Hangry
 Hungry + Angry

In our passage,
 we see Israel in the desert very hungry and angry.
 They are “hangry.”

Our Bible passage uses the word “Grumble” to articulate their “hanger.”

However, the portmanteau “hanger” and even the word “Grumble” does not do justice to the story.

The reason is that in the Hebrew,
 Grumble does not mean a simple complaint of anger.

Grumbling in Hebrew is linked to ‘testing’ or ‘trying’ –

Legal language as evidenced in Heb. 3:8 and 9.

Do not harden your hearts
as you did in the rebellion,
during the time of testing in the wilderness,
where your ancestors tested and tried me,
though for forty years they saw what I did.
Heb. 3:8 and 9

The Israelites’ testing of God
involved bringing a lawsuit against Him, and
they wanted to kill Moses.

If we look at the history of Israel,
their pattern of grumbling –
that is, their propensity to judge and condemn –
runs throughout the Bible.

Do you remember someone else
who was judged unfairly and
sentenced to death by the Israelites?

Yes, did not the Jews under Pontius Pilate
bring a lawsuit against Jesus and
then sentence Him to the death penalty?
“Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” (Mark 15).

Ironically, this same crowd of Jews,
just a week before
offered praises to Jesus:

“Hosanna! Hosanna!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!
The King of Israel” (John 12).

But with Israel, praises do not last long.

A case in point, Exodus 15,
the Israelites sing praises to God for
their victorious crossing of the Red Sea,
They praise God for delivering them
from the hands of the Egyptians, but
just a few days later, in Exodus 16,
they would judge God.

Now it’s easy for us to be judgmental here,
rather than to identify ourselves as one of the grumbling Israelites.

However, 1 Cor. 10 says that the Israelites
sinned and died in the desert
as examples for us today
so that we would not crave the evil things
as they did (1Cor. 10:6, 11),

So that we would not fall into idolatry (Exodus 32) and
sin and die in the desert
as they did (1Cor. 10:7,8),

so that we would not put the Lord
on trial and grumble against God and
Moses as they did (1 Cor. 10:10),

But, what about us?

Are we not like grumbling Israel?

As did Israel, do we not put God to the test? –
do we not put Him on trial?
Do we not pronounce Him guilty as the Jews did to Jesus?

If we are honest,
we will admit we quarrel,
deep inside,
with God all the time.

We raise our fists at God and
put Him to the test – we judge God!

“If you are a good, loving God,
why’s there so much evil and suffering in this world?!?”

“If you are a just, righteous God,
Why do you let bad people
like my enemies
prosper and good people -- like me -- suffer?”

We are grumblers, just like the Israelites.

The Israelite’s rebellion and unfaithfulness
mirror our character and track record,
proving that we are unfaithful Israel.

Our propensity to grumble does not stop with God, however.

Do we not ALSO grumble against each other?

Just as we have this perverse tendency to judge God,
do we not also have an inclination to judge our neighbors?

Yes, it’s part of our sinful nature.

... when you judge others, do you think you will escape God's judgment? ... you are condemning yourself.

Rom. 2:1

You see, when we judge others,
we condemn ourselves because
we are all guilty before a holy, righteous God.

To make this clear to us,
God gave us His Law, the Ten Commandments.

the Ten Commandments reveals God's holiness and
unfortunately for us, it reveals our sinfulness.

The Law is good, but because of our sinfulness,
it can only kill us (2 Cor. 3:6).
It cannot save us.

When we Christians partake in legalistic,
self-righteous acts of condemning others,
it gets ugly and
it gives Christianity a bad name.

See what Paul has to say about this to the church in Rome.

Rom. 2:21-24

You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? ... You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? God's name is blasphemed because of you." Rom. 2:21-24

And even today,
we Christians have been so judgmental that
the world is calling us hypocrites and
even blaspheming God's name.

We see this in the negative image the media is portraying of the church.

Unfortunately, our judging does not stop with the world or with God.

Do we not judge each other at church too?

"Why is he not tithing? What a scrooge!"

"Look, he's not passionate in his singing like me – what a lesser Christian!"

"Look at him!
He's always late for church.
I always come on time!"

"Guess who I saw last night drinking at a bar?"

“I can’t believe a Christian would hang out at a place like that with such bad people, and evil music, and dancing.”

When we have a hard time digging up dirt on someone, we resort to accusing that person of sins that encompasses everyone, don’t we?

Like coveting. It encompasses everyone.

“Look at that person, I can’t believe he covets!”

Who doesn’t covet? Is there anyone here who has never coveted?

Or laziness.

In Exodus, we see Pharaoh pronouncing the Israelites as lazy:

“You lazy Israelites! Now stop being lazy and get back to work! Why is it taking you so long to finish that pyramid!”

I mean, who isn’t lazy? Is there a person here who has never been lazy in his life?

What about jealousy?

She’s such a jealous person!

Who can say that they have never been envious of someone else?

What about arrogance?

“He’s is so arrogant!”

Who isn’t arrogant? Is there a person here that has never been arrogant about even one aspect of their life?

You’ve never been proud of something you’ve accomplished before?

No, I’ve never been proud in my life. I’m a humble person.

If that’s your attitude, you have a problem with false humility?

And sometimes,
we are so eager to judge others,
we even try to trap people by
asking them questions to make them look bad, don’t we?

“So which university did you attend?”
“I attended Seoul National University?”

“Did you hear what he just said?
Did you hear how he bragged about his education?
What an arrogant guy!”

“How many times have you read the Bible?”
“I don’t know about 3 times.”

“Did you hear what he just said,
what an arrogant guy? 3 times!
Why can’t he be humble like the rest of us and
read the Bible barely once in our lifetime?!”

Are judgments are often silly and illogical, aren’t they?
We see a good example of a ridiculous accusation in our
passage.

In vs. 3, the Israelites bring an absurd charge against their leader: "You have bought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death" (Ex. 16:3)

Silly standards used to judge others are not unique to Israel or Christians – it's in all of us.

We all do it to each to other – all the time.

It doesn't matter your religion or worldview.

Christians will judge atheist and atheist will judge Christians.

Conservatives will judge liberals and liberals will judge conservatives.

N. Koreans will judge S. Koreans and S. Koreans will judge N. Koreans.

Old generation will judge the new generation and the new will judge the old.

Smart people will judge unintelligent people and unintelligent will judge smart people.

Skinny people will judge fat people and fat people, skinny people.

Women, men; and men, women.
And the list goes on and on and on.

Now, don't get me wrong.

I'm not saying it's okay to be open-minded, or to be accepting of sin.

No, God will judge all our actions, even down to our private thoughts!

Nor am saying that there's no place for judgment or discernment in our Christian life.

I believe as Christians we should act nobly like the Bereans in Acts 17:11 -- judging all things they hear in light of Scripture.

Nonetheless, the point I want to drive home is the same point that Jesus and Paul and Moses and the Prophets were trying to make in the Bible – we are all first and foremost disobeyers of the Law.

And so, we are in no position to condemn others.

Only God who is holy has the right to judge.

We need to be very careful of our judgmental tendencies:

Because the more we are judgmental, the farther away from repentance and belief we will be, as was Pharaoh and the Israelites.

But do you know the worst thing about our self-righteous judgment is?

Are you ready for a shocker?

In a sense, with our judgment, we kill!

Instead of strumming pleasing sounds of grace and life for others to hear (ie., the Gospel),

we shoot venomous arrows of judgment and death at others.

We are like the religious leaders of Jesus' day.

They love to sit in the seat of Moses (Matt. 23:2) and tie up heavy loads and lay them on the shoulders of men, burdening them with their own self-righteous standards (Matt 23:4,5,15).

² “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat....
⁴ They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. (Matt 23: 2,4,5).

And just like the Israelites,
 who condemned the innocent Jesus to death,
 we, with our judgments, kill others.

If you don't believe me,
 ask the people who received your harsh judgment –
 ask them how they felt when you judged them.

Yesterday, on the SEM group chat,
 Elder Keum sent us a daily bread excerpt on
 words that wound.
 The excerpt starts with an insightful proverb,
 “The words of the reckless pierce like swords.”

It follows with the story of the agonizing heartbreak of Hannah because of Peninnah's [pen neen nah] provoking words.
 You see, just like Peninnah,
 our sinful human inclination is to provoke and
 hate neighbor and hate even God.
 (Rom. 8:7; Tit 3:3; Gen. 6:5; Col 1:21).

Without the work of the Holy Spirit on our hearts,
we are naturally haters of neighbor.

We are just like the Israelites who kill their own prophets,

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those
sent to you
(Matt. 23:37)

who judge God,

and then judge Moses (Ex. 16:2).

We judge and we kill –
we have broken the 10 commandments, and
as with Israel, we are under the same sentence:

death and exclusion from the Promised Land.

However, But God,
Gives us hope!

You see, God,
rather than letting the grumbling Israelites die in the desert,
he graciously provided.

In Exodus it states,

“in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When
the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared
on the desert floor. When the Israelites saw it, they said to each
other, ‘What is it?’ For they did not know what it was. Moses said
to them, ‘It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat’”
(Exodus 16:13-15).

This manna from Heaven was something unfamiliar to them.

Do you know what Manna means?

In Hebrew, manna means “what is it?”

They had never seen anything like it.

It was a genuine, divine sign, miracle and wonder.

This manna tasted like wafers made with honey.

Why the sweet taste of honey?

It was foretaste of the land flowing of milk and what?
... Yes, honey.

Ultimately – it was a foretaste of the Kingdom of God.

The manna was a foretaste of the true bread that
would later come down from heaven – Jesus Christ

In John 6, Jesus says to the 5000 Jews,
I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the
desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from
heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread
that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will
live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of
the world. (John 6:47-51)

The crowd responded to Jesus’ explanation exactly the same way
the Israelites did in the wilderness:

They grumbled.

“We don’t care for this hard teaching!”

But Jesus was moving from Exodus to the cross.

They didn’t understand that the manna in the wilderness was a sign pointing to something greater

– namely, the salvation of Christ.

You see, the manna was a type and shadow.

It was only physical food so it could only meet physical needs.

Temporarily they would be satisfied, but hours later they would hunger and grumble again.

The manna was supposed to lead the Israelites to look to God in faith for their sustenance and salvation until He sent the true and living bread.

That bread came in the person and work of Jesus.

Jesus lived a perfectly obedient life – without sin (Heb. 2:15).

And He offered his body on the cross as a sacrifice for sin –
once and for all –
so that through His blood and body,
He can give life to the world (Heb. 7,9,10).

Now God invites us to feed upon Jesus.

How do we receive this Bread of Life?

Through the preaching of Christ - the Gospel – His life, death and

resurrection.

Now you might say, I've heard the Gospel,

I've graduated from the Gospel.

I don't need it anymore.

Don't let Satan fool you,

as a Christian, you need it everyday for your survival.

Don't you remember that Jesus taught his disciples to pray

"Give us this day our daily bread."?

In the desert,

for forty years,

the Israelites received the same Gospel, manna from heaven –
EVERYDAY.

We Christians need manna everyday,

We all need to feed on the Gospel everyday as our daily bread,
so that we do not grumble against God,

We need to feed on this Gospel manna to strengthen us,
to build us up for our spiritual survival.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

You and I have family members, friends, and relatives

who once went to church,

but like the Israelites, they grumbled –

they became hangry –

and no longer attend church.

In part, we can blame churches – some pastors -- for not

preaching the Gospel from the pulpit, and not emphasizing the importance of the Gospel.

These supposed “shepherds” fed their sheep ... NO Christ – no manna -- to stop them from grumbling,
No manna to help them grow in their daily pilgrimage with Christ, so they became weak in faith and many eventually abandoned the faith.

Now look around you.

Look at each other!

Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

Praise God you are here today – at church –
to feed on the Gospel – to feed on manna for your growth and maturation.

Now I want to leave you with one more portmanteau:

It's Mangry

Can you guess the two words I combined to form the portmanteau, “Mangry”?

????? + Hungry = Mangry

Manna + Hungry = Mangry

To be Mangry is to be Hungry for Manna for our spiritual sustenance!

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I want to conclude with this,

Let us no longer be hangry,
but let us be mangry.

As the deer pants for the water,
may we manger [man Grrr] for

the one from the manger,
Emanuel, God with us!

The true manna that came from heaven,

May we be mangry everyday,
everyday until we reach our final destination —
when we enter the promised land,
God's Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus says,
"Blessed are you who hunger, for you will be satisfied!"

Praise God for the manna He has given us today!
Praise God for the Gospel He has given us today!
Praise God for sending us His Son!
Let's pray!

Heavenly Father,

We bless your Name, for you have given us manna from heaven, despite our grumbling against you. May you forgive us of all our sins and may we repent and believe in you. Give us everyday our daily manna that comes through the Good news of Jesus Christ. May we feed on him for our justification and our daily pilgrimage in this desert until you deliver us safely into your Kingdom. We praise you for your redemptive plan.

