

20Church

3994 Victoria Avenue
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Table in the Wilderness

June 11, 2023

Overview

years, the Lord led you in the wilderness so that He might humble you and test you.

Anybody feel like you're being tested right now?

I am.

Anybody feel like you're being humbled?

Oh, yeah.

The Lord led them through the wilderness and He was testing them in order to know what was in their heart, whether or not you would keep His commandments.

Then I read from the new living translation, these words, so the people of Israel ate manna for 40 years until the Elaiiah arrived at the land where they would settle.

They ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.

Now I want to go back to Exodus chapter 16 where it says, the whole Israelite community sat out from Elam and came to the desert of sin, which is between Elam and Sinai on the 15th day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt.

In the desert, the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron.

The Israelites said to them, if only a way had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt, there we sat around pots of meat, ate all the food we wanted, but you brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.

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, and in this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.

On the sixth day, they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather any other day.

Now Moses and Aaron said to the Israelites, in the evening you will know that it was the Lord who brought you out of Egypt.

And in the morning you will see the glory of the Lord because he has heard your grumbling.

Who are we that we should grumble against us?

Who are we that you should grumble against us?

Moses said, you will know that it was the Lord when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning because he heard your grumbling against him.

Who are we?

You're not grumbling against us.

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You're grumbling against the Lord.
Then Moses told Aaron, say to the whole Israelite community, come before the Lord for he has heard your grumbling.
While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert and there was the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud.
And the Lord said to Moses, I heard their grumbling, tell them at twilight you will eat meat. In the morning you'll be filled with bread.
Then you'll know that I am the Lord your God.
That evening, coil came and covered the camp.
And 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?
They didn't know what it was.
Now reflecting back the psalmist records for us these words.
He did miracles in the sight of their ancestors, in the land of Egypt, in the region of zone.
He divided the sea, he led them through.
He made the waters stand like a wall.
He guided them with the cloud by day and with light from the fire all night.
He split the rocks in the wilderness and gave them water as abundant as the seas.
He brought streams out of a rocky crag.
He made water flow like rivers.
But they continued to sin, rebelling in the wilderness against the Most High.
They willfully put God to the test by demanding food they craved.
They spake against God.
And this was their complaint.
And God spread a table in the wilderness.
They went on.
We know it's true, he struck the water, the water gushed out.
Streams flow abundantly, but can he give us bread?
Can he supply for his people?
When the Lord heard them, he was furious.
When the Lord heard them, he was furious.
And his fire broke out against Jacob.
With his wrath, he rose up against Israel, for they did not believe in God or trust in his deliverance.
I came across that verse, oh my goodness, so many years ago.
And I know not just a few preachers have taken this comment on, and it's just a great banner to preach on.
And the Lord prepare a table in the wilderness.
Well, yes, he can.
But it is most interesting to take some time to consider what it would have taken to prepare a table for them in the wilderness.

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So it's so, it's so interesting.

I found this years ago, and I found it again.

Mr. Google comes up with these things.

Oh, happy day.

So a quartermaster, I think it was in the U.S. army, he reported after doing some studies, you see, historians honestly conclude that there was between 3 million and 3 and a half million people who were following Moses in the wilderness.

It wasn't just a nice congregation, folks.

3 million.

I don't know the size of Toronto right now.

I don't know what the numbers are.

It's a massive place.

What would it take to deliver just one loaf of bread to every house in Toronto?

He said, well, that's kind of silly.

Why would you deliver it?

Well, it's hard to get people to line up properly.

But okay, let's assemble at the C&E.

Enough bread to feed everybody in the town, one loaf of bread.

But wait a minute, one loaf of bread isn't going to be enough.

Let's supply three loaves of bread for every home.

Can you imagine the mayhem of trying to even organize such an event?

It would be incredible.

This army fellow says that it would take every day, 1500 tons of food to feed those people for one day.

That would be, if you were to somehow organize for freight trains to deliver, the trains would be miles long, but that would be for one day.

But wait a minute, when the coil arrived, they would want to cook it.

Moses, we need firewood.

I hear a train coming.

I hear two trains coming, tons and tons of firewood.

God supplied firewood so they could cook the food.

Tommy, I want a bath.

I know, you stink.

But they had to drink water, didn't they?

They had to cleanse themselves.

And maybe they needed to, yeah, if they wanted to drink water, they wanted to have the occasional

bath.

I don't know if they bothered with dishes.

We don't know.

We don't get all of those little dainty items.

We don't know how they eat.

I was in India that when it was time to eat, you sat down, these lovely gals came along,

dressed in their saris, and they dropped in front of you a great palm leaf.
Then they came and they washed off the palm leaf with a little cup of water.
Then they came along and they plunked some rice, and then they came along and they put a little piece of chicken on the leaf as you sat cross-legged with it on the ground.
It was a delightful way to eat my food, but oh, my hand, hello.
They came along and you held out your hand and you were able to wash your hand before you ate.
You didn't need a fork.
You didn't need a knife.
They ate their biblical, just like Adam.
So I don't know that they had to have dishes.
But let's just say enough water to bathe, enough water to keep them alive.
It's been estimated that for an average family, 20 quarts of water for a day would be kind of nice.
And when it's 108 degrees in the daytime, that's Fahrenheit, you're going to boil water pretty soon with that temperature.
You would have taken tank cars delivering that water forever and ever and ever.
We're talking about millions of gallons of water every day.
What can God prepare a table in the wilderness?
Isn't it interesting that the Lord did not put the bread on their table?
They had to go out and gather it.
We are such, we want everything, we want everything to come by Uber now.
We don't even want to go shopping.
We bring it to me.
Look after me.
They had to do something.
Jesus often, and in the Old Testament as well, when the Lord was prepared to do something miraculous for you, He often gave you a word, a commandment, which required for you then to do a work and then came the miracle.
Gather up vessels the prophets said.
Gather up vessels and begin to fill them with oil.
You take the little bit of oil and you fill that vessel and you fill.
They had to do a little bit of work.
Go and dip in the river Jordan and the fellow was covered with leprosy got all upset and fussed.
What's wrong with my river?
How come I come all this way to get healed?
Now this guy tells me to go and jump in the river.
Go jump in the lake, he was told.
If he had refused to go and jump in the water, he never bought a goddess' heel.
He got a word which required him to function and then came the miracle.
You on Brad?
You collected in the morning.

I have a dumb, mysterious mind.
That's no secret.
You've caught up to that now.
I can hear a little fellow crawling out of his brand new sleeping bag.
They just picked up from Walmart and he's about to crawl out of the tent and he hears
this low-based voice.
Where do you think you're going?
Me and Tommy, we're going to go out and have some fun this morning.
No you're not.
Not until Mama goes and gathers up the bread.
I'm sick of your toe prints and my toast in the morning.
The bread was on the ground.
They had to go out and collect it.
And then there were those crazy birds.
The word says that a wind came up and all of a sudden these birds came.
They were quails.
Some of you huntsmen can tell you.
Alfred, have you ever gone hunting quail?
I think they're kind of like a ptarmigan.
How many people will a typical ptarmigan from lab city?
How many people would that feed?
You or your brother-in-law?
A typical...
Pardon?
One person.
I don't think quails are the size of a 40-pound turkey, are they?
So you'd have to have a lot of birds.
You'll get a family of five, a family of seven.
How many birds is it going to take to feed us?
And the Lord caused a wind to come and drop them around their tents.
All of a sudden somebody looks up in the sky and there's a cloud coming.
It doesn't look like rain, what is it?
Somebody else, it's angry birds, it's angry birds.
Everybody run for your life under...
Here's birds having cardiac arrest dropping out of the sky.
There had to be a prayer lying the following evening to pray for healing because so many
people got whiplash.
They got dropped on the head by an oversized check-in flying over heart attack, but folks,
they got to eat meat.
Can God provide for you in your wilderness?
Of course he can.
In 40 years, 40 years every morning the bread was there.
I've been trying to find out for how long did the birds come?

And there's a little bit of argument about that.
And there's some saying they only came once.
And others saying, oh no, no, it came just like the bread did.
Who cares?
They lasted for 40 years.
Their shoes did not wear out.
Their clothing did not wear out.
The Lord provided for them all the way.
Jesus said, don't lay awake at night wondering about what you're going to eat, how you're going to do this, how you're going to do that.
He said, Heavenly Father takes care of the little birds.
The little fellas always find a place to build a nest.
There's always enough to take care of them.
The Lord covers the fields with beautiful lilies.
They're not lilies appearing on my half acre property down now.
They're little beautiful little yellow flowers.
I'm trying to get happy about that.
The Lord provides.
The Lord provides.
What's wrong with you, bunkie?
Everything is going to be all right.
The Lord, what did the psalmist say?
Once I was young, now I'm old.
I've never seen the righteous forsaken nor their children begging for bread.
The Lord can provide and the Lord does provide.
What the Lord provided for them over the course of 40 years, staggers, the imagination.
I have a couple of little stories to tell you.
You like stories, right?
You like stories you're my friend.
Some people have said, we don't want to hear stories.
The guy who runs a bracelet, I'd have you preach for us, but you tell too many stories.
I said, you wouldn't get along with Jesus very well either.
So we were invited to go.
I was invited.
I went solo this time to Peru, to do Heaven's Case House flames.
And I took a couple of people with me from Windsor at the time.
And when we arrived down there, everything that could go wrong went wrong.
The church that had sent the word and said, can we have the drama?
And Cruellet called me and said, Forrest, could you do this for us?
I said, sure.
And so I was kind of like the other guy.
Everything was happening between he, his office, and them.
So I arrived there to find out what's expected.

And so here it was a great assemblies of God church, but it was a dinky place.
And the building, the building would not house as many people as you could sit on this side of our church.
We're used to working with a stage the size of this auditorium.
Here's this little place.
So I had to stage it all outside.
So we had to, I won't go into all the details.
But it was an incredible task to try and create a stage.
And to get some little old grannies to sew together some pieces of tarp to make a tent that we would call hell.
And it was just endless.
And then when I asked for the young people to come, it was lost in translation.
Somebody went all through the community and just said, there's some gringo over here and he wanted to act in a play, all these young people showed up.
Not one of them knew the gospel, not one of them.
The first piece people could say was Jesus and the angels.
I was in the wilderness and I was looking for a little piece of bread.
Hello?
It was an incredible challenge.
But God met us all the way.
There was a challenge with even electricity because now the church building's over there and I've got to set it up over here.
I needed, so there was a big wall.
So I said, I'll use the wall as kind of like at least some kind of a backdrop and put these boards here.
But I need power.
So I spoke to Guarimot, who was a Mexican from Windsor.
And I took him along because he could translate for me, sort of.
So I called and I'm not making this up.
This is how we talk.
I said, Guarimot.
See?
I said, I need power.
I need lighting.
I need all this stuff.
So I said, on that wall right there, there's a metal plate.
I said, find a screwdriver.
Take the plate off the wall.
I think you'll find power behind.
Can you do that for me?
See, he's in your.
So way he goes, and I didn't even see him for a bit, all of a sudden Guarimot comes like this.

He says, saying, you're the power.
She's very good.
So then we had this follow spot.
If you've seen the drama, you know how this works.
We had the follow spot.
So I get it all plugged in.
The bulb didn't make it the journey.
Somehow it got shaken up or whatever.
I guess the filaments were shot.
Here I am in a country so far away from home.
I don't know how I need a bulb.
And it's got to go in this crazy thing from some, you know, theater company somewhere
in North America.
I don't know about voltage.
I don't know about amperage.
When I flip a switch on the wall of the lights don't come on.
I live in the dark.
Like I don't know anything like this, right?
And so I asked Guarimot, I said, you got to find me a bulb.
And so he and this other fellow disappeared for a whole afternoon and about an hour before
we were going to begin our very first presentation.
I'm worried to death.
We don't have a light.
How are we going to do this?
They come walking in holding a bulb.
I said, where'd you get it?
And the story is too long for me to relate to you.
But they went somewhere knocked on the door of a university.
No bulb.
But here's the phone number of somebody who used to work here and on and on and on.
And so they went and they found that man's house knocked on his door, held up this bulb,
and were able to speak in their local language and said, is there any chance?
He said, just a minute.
He went into the somehow in the dark caverns of his own home, came up with a brand new bulb
in a box and gave it to us.
And within the hour we had the thing up and that very first night it was over 100 people
gave their lives to Jesus.
Can God prepare a table in your wilderness?
Can God provide for you?
The answer is yes.
Passing another church.
Not going to tell you where.
It doesn't really matter.

But when I got there they had some financial challenges like mountainous.
And so I made a suggestion to the whole congregation that in such and such a Sunday I'm inviting you to please consider put your paycheck in the offering because we're really up against it.
And if you can't do that, do something.
Do whatever you can because we're up against the wall.
Not because of crazy spending.
I'd cut all the spending back that I could but I was dealing with old deficit and something like our government.
And so, so, somebody cleared his throat.
So, what happened then?
There was a specific Sunday and there was this couple in the church that April and I were best friends with forever.
In fact, I'm going to call them Georgie.
I led Georgie to the Lord when we were teenagers.
It's just a long story.
The very first Sunday afternoon that Georgie dated Beverly, I dated April and it was the girl's idea.
So, as two couples, we hung out forever.
We were in their wedding.
They were in our wedding.
We were ever so close.
And then I moved on when in the ministry did this and all of a sudden I end up back, pastoring the very church where they attend.
So now, there's a story.
I saw George early that morning.
We had a big bus.
Sunday School of Ministry, I found George in the kitchen with all the guys, wolfing down donuts and drinking coffee before the buses went out.
That was their routine.
I walked up and grabbed Georgie by the collar and said, no, Georgie, your paycheck goes in the offering today.
Poor old Georgie looked at me and said, yes, sir.
I was funding him.
There was no, there was pressure, but you didn't have to.
It was like, let's work together on this.
He told me a story the following Tuesday.
He had to have a meeting with me.
He said, who did you tell?
And how did you even know what to tell?
He said, I don't know what you're talking.
I think you do.

I said, Georgie, we're buddies.
We share everything.
What is on your mind?
He said, pastor, we're going through a very, very tight place in our life together as a family.
Money just isn't available.
He drove a big truck that he owned.
It ran into difficulty.
The cost of repairs was over and above anything.
They were in debt up to here.
He said, as of last Friday, we had no money.
He said, Bev said, what are we going to eat?
He said, we finished up the cereal.
We did this.
We did that.
He said, pastor, our cupboard was empty.
He said, on Sunday morning, we went to church as a family, empty bellings.
We had eaten nothing.
But he said, I did have a \$20 bill in my pocket.
And Bev said, we've got to go grow cheese after the server.
He said, then you grab me by the collar and said, I want your whole paycheck.
He said, pastor, I am most fainted.
He said, I love you.
I want to support you.
But I'm down to my last \$20 and there's no food at home.
He said, somebody came and got me and said, Georgie, bill didn't show up.
You got to help serve at the taking of the offering.
He said, I was perishing, standing at the end of every, you know how traditionally it works, passing the offering plate.
He said, I felt, I felt around.
I felt terrible.
Who was I to pass the offering plate for others to give?
When I was clutching a \$20 bill in my pocket, there's no way I could give that up.
He said, we all arrived at the back of that massive auditorium.
And as is the habit they would, all the ushers would gather together and like soldiers, they would out into the lobby, go down the hall and went into a door where there was a safe and they would count the offering.
They didn't like my preaching, so they did it while I was preaching.
They were just about to close the door and Georgie was backing out because this was not his turn to be in there.
He suddenly put his foot in the door.
Somebody said, Georgie, get your foot out of the door.
He said, now there's something I have to do.

He pulled.

He says, pastor.

I pulled out the \$20.

He said, I passed the \$20 bill through the space in the door and said, I forgot to put this in.

He said, I went in and he said, I tried to listen to you, but he said, I really struggled.

I really struggled in my mind.

What am I going to tell my wife?

What am I going to tell my kids?

I put our last \$20 in because he said, I felt like, come on, Georgie, you've got to trust God, somehow or other.

The end of the service came.

People were leaving.

He said, my wife is standing at the back, tapping her toe.

You know, let's get out of here.

Georgie, you've been here since seven in the morning with the bus guys.

We got to get out of here.

The kids are starving.

He said, I ignored her.

I kept on going chatting with people, chatting with people.

He said, I couldn't face her.

I didn't know what I was going to do.

He said, finally, he said, she's at the back of the auditorium.

He said, I'm the only person left in the room.

She yells and says, Georgie, come on.

Well, yeah.

He said, as I sheepishly walked up the aisle, dying a thousand deaths.

All of a sudden, he said, one of the big doors of the auditorium swung open.

He said, it was Gordy.

I've known Gordy forever.

He said it was Gordy.

Gordy stepped into the auditorium and said, Georgie, I'm ever glad I caught you here.

He said, Sunday after Sunday.

He said, we're heading out.

He said, we'd like to go to our favorite restaurant and, you know, dying on that big buffet thing or whatever.

And he said, my wife is forever saying, you dead invite Georgie and his family, right?

Oh, I forgot again.

He said, we got several blocks away.

And she said, Gordon, I'm what's wrong with your head.

You turn this car around.

So he said, I came back now.

Georgie, please tell me you have no plans for lunch.

Georgie said, you know what, Gordon?
I would change anything to accommodate you.
So he said, they went to a restaurant.
And here's the kids going along the buffet, helping themselves.
And he's walking along behind them and saying, take some more honey, take some more.
Don't be, don't be bashful.
He said, there's nothing at home past your day.
This is our food for the week.
He, I've had enough that he eats some more.
He said, those people were so generous, they treated us to that lovely banquet meal.
He said, we got in the car.
He said, my wife said, maybe we should stop, Georgie, and buy the groceries.
He said, oh, we've had a big meal.
We can worry about that later today.
He said, as we pulled in the driveway, he said, the sun, Brian, yell right from behind
Georgie's ear.
Georgie's ear and said, Dad, what's that all in front of us?
He said, the front door of our house.
He said, we're upon everybody in the car, focuses on the front porch.
Oh, I don't know.
Oh, there's something there, Dad.
The moment the car stopped, Brian bounced out of the car, raced up to the house.
He come running back and he said, groceries, groceries, groceries, hundreds and thousands,
Dad, it's groceries.
He said, pastor, when we got to the porch, he said, the surface was
there.
The surface of the porch was covered with boxes of groceries.
Our cupboard is full.
You were behind this.
I said, Georgie, I never knew you were in trouble.
You never said a word to me.
Who did that?
I said, the guy you gave the 20 bucks to, that's who did that.
God took care of you, George.
God was testing you that \$20 bill.
God was testing you through the whole thing.
I wasn't aware, but I'm telling you what I proceed now.
It says, why did the Lord lead the children of Israel for so long in the desert?
He was testing them.
He was trying to see if they really, really believed in him.
Can God prepare a table for you?
Oh, no, don't come get too loud on me now.
No, no, don't you hear something?

I hear a train.
I hear a train coming.
The young fellow said to the old prophet, I see a cloud in the air.
It's only the size of a man's fist, and the old prophet said, run!
It's God, he's sending rain.
I see a cloud in the sky.
I hear a train on the road.
There's another word in the Word of God.
I promise when you hear the rustle of the mowberry bush, know the Lord is on his way.
He rides in the heavens to help you.
To lead point A and to get point B, I already told you there is no point A, there is no point B where God leaves there and comes here.
He says, all you have to do is let me know.
I'll ride the heavens to get to you, but if you're spiritually wise and clued into what the Word of God says, he's as close as the breath in your nostrils.
He's never far from any one of us.
Just for his name, and he's there.
And it's my pathetic little 2x4 comprised of a lot of splinters that gets the idea that God's far away, that heaven see my brass.
How come God's not answering my prayer?
Hey, Bunkie, he's as close as the mention of his name.
He's closer than the air in your nostrils.
He can prepare a table in the wilderness if you're going through a time of testing.
Put your hand in the hand of the man of Galilee.
He'll make a difference.
So Heavenly Father, thank you this morning for your generous provision of promise upon, promise upon, promise upon, promise.
Lord, we're drowning in promises.
How glorious is your provision for people who truly believe and trust in you?
Now Lord, we have a hard time when it seems like the answer has been delayed, when it seems that this just isn't the way that I thought it would turn out.
The bank account is a little lean.
The message did not arrive on time.
Nothing's coming together as it should, Lord.
The little widow says, I'm just going to bake a little cake and then my son and I are going to die of starvation, not realizing that the man of God standing before her was sent by God for such an hour as this.
Oh Lord, your promises are generous, they're glorious, and they're directed specifically toward people who would dare to believe.
Give us a word, we'll do the work and we expect a miracle in Jesus' name.
I love you a little bit, but He loves you a whole batch and He's there for you.
Amen.
Now is your living.

