

The Discipline of Dailyness

Third of three sermons in the
2022 Stewardship Commitment Series

“Becoming Richer”

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Rocky River Presbyterian Church, Rocky River, Ohio

October 24, 2021

2 Corinthians 9:10-12 (CEB)

¹⁰The one who supplies seed for planting and bread for eating will supply and multiply your seed and will increase your crop, which is righteousness. ¹¹You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous in every way. Such generosity produces thanksgiving to God through us. ¹²Your ministry of this service to God’s people isn’t only fully meeting their needs but it is also multiplying in many expressions of thanksgiving to God.

Exodus Chapter 16 (selected verses) (CEB)

²The whole Israelite community complained against Moses and Aaron in the desert. ...“Oh, how we wish that the LORD had just put us to death while we were still in the land of Egypt. There we could sit by the pots cooking meat and eat our fill of bread. Instead, you’ve brought us out into this desert to starve this whole assembly to death.”

⁶So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “The LORD will give you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning because the LORD heard the complaints you made against him....” ¹³In the evening a flock of quail flew down and covered the camp. And in the morning there was a layer of dew all around the camp.

¹⁴When the layer of dew lifted, there on the desert surface were thin flakes, as thin as frost on the ground. ¹⁵When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, “What is it?” They didn’t know what it was.

Moses said to them, “This is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat. ¹⁶This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Collect as much of it as each of you can eat.... You may collect for the number of people in your household.’”

¹⁷The Israelites did as Moses said, some collecting more, some less. ¹⁸But when they measured it out... the ones who had collected more had nothing left over, and the ones who had collected less had no shortage. Everyone collected just as much as they could eat. ¹⁹Moses said to them, “Don’t keep any of it until morning.” ²⁰But they didn’t listen to Moses. Some kept part of it until morning, but it became infested with worms and stank.

²²On the sixth day the people collected twice as much food as usual... ²³[Moses] said to them, “This is what the LORD has said, ‘Tomorrow is a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. But you can set aside and keep all the leftovers until the next morning.’”

²⁴So they set the leftovers aside until morning, as Moses had commanded. They didn’t stink or become infested with worms. ²⁵The next day Moses said, “Eat it today, because today is a Sabbath to the LORD. Today you won’t find it out in the field. ²⁶Six days you will gather it. But on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be nothing to gather....”

³⁰So the people rested on the seventh day.

You go to your pharmacy to pick up a new prescription from your doctor. You have a thirty-day supply – 1 capsule per day for some chronic pain. You think to yourself, “You know, it’s going to be inconvenient to have to remember every single day to take one of these capsules. And the discomfort *is* a nuisance. Why not just take all the pills right now?”

Of course, that would not only be unwise but potentially disastrous. There's a reason your physician prescribed one dose *per day*. The "discipline of dailyness" in taking the medication provides a benefit that lasts over time.

Today we heard a Bible story urging the "discipline of dailyness." The story came from the era when our Israelite ancestors were relocating after captivity as slaves in Egypt. They were relocating to a future of freedom to live and worship in a promised land called Canaan on the other side of the Sinai peninsula. You know, of course, that God provided their escape through the leadership of Moses and his brother Aaron. God made the obstacle of the Red Sea become a passageway to safety from Pharaoh's armies.

Then the people traveled — "wandered" — in the wilderness of Sinai for a long, long, long time. By definition, a wilderness is not lush with crops to harvest or game to hunt or pools of sweet, fresh water. Daily life traveling through the wilderness was a challenging time for the Israelites, those recently escaped Hebrew slaves.

The Bible's account in the book of Exodus says that the Israelites frequently became frustrated with the difficulty of their escape. They actually began to say, "You know, if we were still slaves back in Egypt, at least we would have had stew to eat and water from the Nile to quench our thirst." They complained about the leadership of Moses and his brother Aaron. Not meaning to "pass the buck," the brothers reminded the people that they were really complaining about God.

God had already heard their cries. God had already made provisions for the Israelites: quails would be their meat for evening, and a residue like baking flour would appear across the land in the morning. They'd never seen anything like it before and asked in Hebrew, "*Man hu?*" which means "What is it?" That's what they started to call the stuff: "*man hu*" or "manna." They could bake it into a wafery bread with a slight honey taste.

Is there any scientific basis for such an experience? Actually, yes. There is

...a natural phenomenon in the Sinai Peninsula. A type of plant lice punctures the fruit of the tamarisk tree and excretes a substance from this juice, a yellowish-white flake or ball. During the warmth of the day it disintegrates, but it congeals when it is cold. It has a sweet taste. Rich in carbohydrates and sugar, it is still gathered by natives, who bake it into a kind of bread.... The food decays quickly and attracts ants. [...As for the quails,] migratory birds flying in from Africa or blown in from the Mediterranean are often exhausted enough to be caught by hand.¹

God's instructions were that each family was to gather enough manna for their need each day, but not stockpile it. Also, they were to use what they took on that day,

¹ Terence E. Fretheim, Interpretation—a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching: Exodus. Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1991, 182

but not keep leftovers overnight. Exodus tells us that some gathered more, others less, “But when they measured it... those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage.”² And for those who tried to keep leftovers rather than trust God for the next day’s provision, they found that “it bred worms and became foul.”³ And yet, because the Israelites observed each seventh day as a Sabbath of worship and rest when they were to refrain from all work, they were instructed to gather and prepare twice as much on the sixth day, and what they prepared did *not* spoil on the seventh day.

So during this time of “community formation” in the wilderness as the Israelites learned to depend on God and one another, one of the “lessons” God imparted was the “discipline of dailyness”: learning to trust God to provide what they needed for daily life.

Many, many years later Jesus would echo that discipline of dailyness when he taught his followers to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Another possible translation of that phrase is “Give us our bread for tomorrow.”⁴ When those listening to Jesus would recall the story of the Exodus, that would make perfect sense: fed by the manna for that day, the Israelites would pray for the gift of manna for tomorrow.

We tend to view what’s truly miraculous as ordinary.

- A botanist would explain the interaction of a teeny-tiny bug and a tamarisk plant as an ordinary, natural process.
- An ornithologist studying bird migration would explain the descent of flocks of quail as ordinary and to be expected.

But those ordinary processes were seen as a miraculous provision for the hungry, desperate, Israelites isolated in the desolate wilderness.

I’m sure that we experience miracles which we view as ordinary, everyday happenings. Think how many miracles you experience in the ordinary activities of your daily life.

I think of our worship broadcasts going out over the internet. You can be sitting in your home in Cleveland or a Westshore suburb, or sitting in an airport waiting for your return flight to Hopkins International, or connected to Wi-Fi in your hotel room in Canberra or Caracas or Crete... and you can watch one of our broadcasts on a TV or tablet or smartphone. You watch videos all the time, part of your ordinary daily activities. But it’s a miracle. It’s a miracle that joins us in worship as sisters and brothers in Christ no matter where we happen to be located, no matter if we take in the

² See Exodus 16:17 NRSV

³ Exodus 16:20 NRSV

⁴ [Lord's Prayer - Wikipedia](#) accessed 10/19/2021

broadcast today or tomorrow or next week or next month. It's a miracle that we perceive as an ordinary part of our lives.

Here's another miracle hidden in the ordinariness of daily living that we think about only when we experience a power outage. That's when you walk into another room, instinctively flip a switch and, when nothing happens, remember, "Oh, right. The power's out." How the utility companies can generate and transmit power over such long distances, and how it can find its way safely through our homes, and how it can provide the energy to power the conveniences of central heating, food refrigeration, illumination, entertainment, and more – it's a miracle that we experience every day.

There's another miracle I hope we recognize: that God makes it possible for us to provide for ourselves and our families, and to provide for the needs of other people who, for a variety of reasons, struggle from time to time to be able to provide for themselves.

On this Sunday like most other Sundays we are part of a miracle. We are part of a community who choose not to be consumed by self-interest. We choose instead to devote ourselves to caring for one another. Through God's love shown to us and shared with us in Jesus Christ we see each other as sisters and brothers. Regardless of the difference in our ages, the various communities we call home, the variety of our backgrounds and interests and viewpoints, we choose to love one another. And we manifest that love by taking a measure of our treasure and sharing it with this church.

Who does that?!? Who takes what's theirs and gives it away freely, generously, gracefully, joyfully? Who makes a deliberate, thoughtful, reasoned, prayerful decision to fill out a piece of paper and pledge money gifts to a church for intangible blessings of spiritual and emotional and physical care and ministry?

Who does that? We do. Followers of the One who came not to be served but to serve others. It seems so normal to us. Everyday. Ordinary. Typical. That's why we often forget what a miracle it is when we respond to God's invitation, as scripture urges, to "love one another as I have loved you."⁵

This month we've been hearing the words of the apostle Paul counseling the Christians in Corinth, Greece all those centuries ago. Paul reminded them that it is God who makes possible seed for planting and bread for eating. Paul assured them, "You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous in every way."⁶

Let us embrace the "discipline of dailyness" to remember day by day that it is God who provides our daily bread, our "bread for tomorrow," making us rich in every way so that we, too, can be generous in every way.

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⁵ See John 13:34

⁶ 2 Corinthians 9:11 Common English Bible

