

Adult sermon notes

Exodus 16:9-26

In Session 2 it was suggested that although Israel had been set free from Egypt they still needed to learn to live in that freedom. The story of the manna is about Israel learning to trust in the day to day provision of God for his people. Of course the passage is not directly about money but the principles it teaches can and must be applied to God's provision to us through the money that is entrusted to us by God. It is no accident that Paul himself quotes this passage in 2 Cor 8 precisely in the context of talking about money.

More than just money

The poverty Israel knew in Egypt ended when they left with Egyptian clothing, jewellery and livestock. However, their captivity ran much deeper. There was also a scarcity of expectation, of faith in their God, of self-awareness of themselves as a people of promise. Exodus 6:9 shows that the enslavement of Israel crushed the spirits of the people. Learning to think and live as free people was the challenge that faced Israel in the harshness of the desert. They were hungry and thirsty. At their first encounter with pressing need they doubted the provision of God. They grumbled about the leadership of Moses and Aaron and they looked back on their Egypt experience through rose-tinted spectacles believing it to be a place of plenty. Tough times are often the place where we learn most about trusting in God.

The lesson of the manna

Through the wilderness wanderings Israel learns a new way of living and of trusting. This is a new 'economy of God', and it is different from what they learned in Egypt. In Egypt (as in all societies) some had more than they can eat, drink and spend while others live on the poverty line. In God's economy it is different.

Israel had to learn a new way of trusting. It is understandable that those who have been hungry fear

being so again. But manna cannot be stored. The 'extra' that is kept by the greedy, the frightened, those who cannot shake off the memory of slavery, simply rots. By contrast, accepted as a daily gift, the manna fed the weak, the poor, the sick the elder, the very young – everyone's needs were met.

Through the gift of manna God taught the Israelites a new way of thinking, living and trusting. The gift cannot be hoarded, controlled or possessed. It is given to meet daily needs. It is for sharing and not for accumulating. This is a different economy and both Moses and God were angry at those who attempted to store it overnight and collect on the Sabbath.

The slowness of Israel to learn is both a comfort and challenge for us as we learn to bring our money and possessions into God's economy – a new way of thinking about money that involves trusting God and not storing possessions.

The Sabbath principle

There is something else: Manna is not provided on the Sabbath. The 'double portion' collected on Friday will see them through God's day of rest. At the heart of Israel's experience of God's provision is a 'Sabbath'. This is a time of not working, of not collecting. There is something more valuable in life than collecting and accumulating. The gift of rest is a reminder of God as the giver of all we need. As the saying goes, no one has been heard to say on their deathbed, 'I wish I had spent more time at the office'. Understanding the Sabbath is so much richer than whether we shop or go to the cinema on a Sunday. It is about our attitude to a consumer lifestyle seven days a week. The Sabbath is about trusting, remembering, thanking and acknowledging God as provider of all we need.