



Exodus (Part 19) – Grumbling or Gratitude

Trevor Joy – February 12, 2017

[Video]

From darkness to light, this is the story we all share as the people of God. He draws us out to draw us in. From the birth of Israel to the church today, God delivers and dwells with his people. This story began several thousand years ago, and it began with a promise from God to Abraham that he would make his offspring more numerous than the stars in the sky, a great nation that would one day dwell in the Promised Land.

More than 400 years passed, and Abraham's descendants had not seen this promise fulfilled. Instead, the Israelites lived as foreigners in the land of Egypt. Fearing that the Hebrews would grow into a mighty nation and overtake them, the Pharaoh of Egypt forced them to work as slaves, but Israel continued to grow. In response, the Egyptians increased their oppression of God's people, and Pharaoh gave a terrible decree. Every son born to the Hebrews would be thrown into the river.

But a Levite couple defied this order, trusting God's will for their son's life, and God did have a plan for this child. Pharaoh's daughter found the baby and took pity on him. She named him Moses because he was drawn out of the water. As Moses grew older and saw the suffering of his people, anger burned within him. When he witnessed an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, Moses killed the man and fled Egypt to hide in the desert.

Years passed, and Moses made a new life for himself in Midian. Then one day the voice of the Lord called out to him from a burning bush. God told Moses that he saw the persecution of his people in Egypt and he heard their cries. He promised to deliver the Israelites from slavery, and he commanded Moses to go before Pharaoh on their behalf. Moses was terrified, so God sent Moses' brother Aaron to go with him.

The brothers went before Pharaoh, performing signs and wonders, but Pharaoh would not listen, so God brought down plagues upon Egypt, yet Pharaoh's heart remained as hard as stone. To prepare for the tenth and final plague, the Hebrews marked their doors with the blood of spotless lambs. That night, the angel of death passed through the kingdom, killing the firstborn child of every Egyptian household that did not bear the mark, including Pharaoh's.

Heartbroken, Pharaoh told the Israelites to go. They were finally set free, and the Spirit of God led the people out and toward the Promised Land, but Pharaoh's grief soon turned to rage. He changed his mind and then commanded the Egyptian army to pursue them. When the Israelites came to the Red Sea, Moses lifted his staff to the sky and the waters parted. The Hebrews passed through the towering waves, and the Egyptians were swallowed by the sea.

The Israelites found themselves in a harsh wilderness. Though they had just witnessed God's power and might in rescuing them, the people doubted their Deliverer would provide and, instead, complained of hunger and thirst. A few days later, they found manna on the ground, sweet and good to eat, and the Lord told Moses to strike a rock with his staff, giving them water to drink. The Lord had provided yet again.

As the Israelites approached Mount Sinai, Moses delivered a word from God. If they obeyed and kept God's covenant, God would make them his treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, and the people promised to do so. Three days later, the mountain shook as a sound like a trumpet grew louder and louder. Then the Lord came down in fire and smoke. When the people heard God's voice, they grew afraid and asked Moses to speak with God on their behalf.

God gave Moses many laws and instructions, including the Ten Commandments, and the Hebrews promised to worship the Lord alone and to keep his laws. Moses spent 40 days and nights on the mountain with God and returned to find the people bowing down to an idol. They had forgotten their promise. Moses burned the idols and atoned for the people's sin, and though God punished the Israelites, he did not destroy them completely.

After the Israelites repented of their unfaithfulness, they went to work making everything the Lord had instructed. They sewed fine garments for Aaron and his sons and consecrated them with oil for their service as priests. They built the ark of the covenant to hold the tablets of the Law and also built the tabernacle where God would dwell with his people...Yahweh, the one who drew them out of slavery.

Though the Israelites would endure more strife and hardship, they continued on in hope toward the Promised Land. The story of Israel is the story of us today. We are God's people. He draws us out to draw us in, and, like the Israelites, we still await the Promised Land in the midst of our sin and suffering, yet God is with us.

[End of video]

Good morning. I was joking with our staff last night after we walked through the sound check that it's hard to come out after that, because I feel like I'm entering into a scene after we've just shown the final scene of *Braveheart*. It's really epic, and then I walk out and it's like, "Here we go. Let's just do this." I feel the need for us to go and do something right now, but instead we're going to dive in together.

I'm excited to be with you this morning. If you missed the welcome, my name is Trevor Joy. I'm one of the pastors and elders here. I'm excited to dive in God's Word and continue on in our study of Exodus this morning. If you'll allow me, how I want to set the table for our time this morning and our story, the specific part of the narrative we're going to be at in Exodus, I want to share my own story to give us context for what we're going to be diving into today.

A couple of years ago, Michael and I were asked to go to a church-planting conference in England to see how The Village can be involved in church planting around the world. We were excited. We said, "Yes, we'd love to go." We began to make travel plans for that. If you don't know me, then I'll let you in on a little bit about me. I don't like to fly. If I'm going to be really honest, I hate to fly. I get really anxious about flying. Even just mentioning flying as I'm talking to you gets me kind of anxious just thinking about it.

If I have the opportunity to pick another mode of transportation I'll do it. I'm the guy who's like, "Hey, let's go on a long road trip. Let's do that." Unfortunately, going to England, I wasn't left with a plethora of options. It's board a plane, and the whole boat thing I don't think is still a thing, so plane was our choice. So we made our travel plans. The idea was to leave on a Sunday evening, fly overnight, and get there the next morning so you can sleep on the plane, be rested, and be there in the morning ready to go. That's the idea.

So Michael and I go. We're with a group. We board the plane. It's a really, really big plane. It's a new plane. I did a lot of research on it. It's a really safe plane. It had good reviews. I was a little nervous. It was a two-engine plane not a four-engine plane, but those two engines were the size of most small aircrafts' whole shell, so they were big engines. I felt good about it. It was a big plane.

Our seats were in a good spot. We were at the bulkhead. It was myself, Michael was right here, and the bulkhead wall was in front of us with our little screens. Pretty much those screens' sole purpose is to tell you the time and temperature and chart your flight path. That's sitting right in front of us and then, of course, the exit doors on our right and our left.

So they come in. We give them our verbal "Yes, we're good to open up those doors should anything happen." They don't know who they're asking. I thought, "Yes, Michael will for sure put my oxygen mask on and open those doors should anything happen. I will be rendered useless, but I'm going to answer 'Yes,' because I'm a man, and in pride I don't want to let you in on what's going on inside me right now."

We taxi out to the runway. The plane takes off. It's a big plane. What I hate about flying are takeoffs, because there are just a bunch of weird noises that happen. Every plane is a little bit different. I know... I hear all of them every time, and I recognize that's the landing gear. I recognize that's the wing, or whatever, or we're getting through the clouds. I get it. Every time, everybody tells me. It doesn't matter. When I'm in the moment, there are weird, wrong noises.

What's nice about a big plane is you're kind of camouflaged from that. You really don't hear those noises. So we're taking off. It's a smooth takeoff. We get up to cruising altitude. The captain comes on and says, "Hey, we're at this altitude for our time. This is going to be our flight time." I'm like, "Great. Okay. I'm settled in. I feel good. We're doing this. It's going well. Okay. All right. I'm settled."

Then they come around and give us our menus for dinner. It's like, "You can have a chicken wrap or a chicken wrap." We make our selection. We eat dinner. They come back around, take our plates, and then they come around and start doing the routine to get everybody settled for the night. They are passing out blankets and pillows. They're asking if you want another drink before the end of the night, or whatever, and begin to turn the lights off.

Right as this is happening, the plane starts to experience the one thing I hate more than takeoffs, and that's turbulence. I hate turbulence. Turbulence, to me, is a product of something going wrong.

It's not a product of just the natural environment. I get it. Don't send me the email. I've talked to pilots. I understand what you're logically going to respond to me. In that moment, it does not matter. What computes in my mind and heart is "Something is wrong."

So turbulence begins, and I'm starting to get anxious. Everybody is getting in the moment where they're starting to calm down. This turbulence is moving, and I'm going to describe this turbulence in two ways. It was persistent and ever-increasing in intensity. There was a group flying with us, and I've asked them since then, so if you're thinking I'm just responding out of my own fear, or whatever, that I'm exaggerating...no, they have concurred this turbulence was persistent and ever-increasing in intensity.

As they're going around and getting everybody settled in, tucked in for the night, I'm just sitting there. They come and give me the blanket and pillow, and I'm not even thinking about that. Literally, all I'm thinking about is this plane is shaking and it's not stopping and it's ever-increasing in intensity. Everybody else is getting ready to go to bed, and I'm going, "No."

Here's the scene. Let me just invite you into this, my little personal nightmare. Michael is sitting next to me. He breaks out his neck pillow and his blankie, rolls over, and goes sound asleep. They shut off the lights and pass out the headphones, and everybody is either watching a movie or sleeping, relaxed and calm. I'm just sitting there with nothing but my pillow and blanket in my lap, sweating, staring at my new friend for the next eight hours, which is this screen that's going to tell me how long it's going to take to get there, and the plane is continuing to shake.

I'm just kind of alone, staring at the screen. As the turbulence persists and continues to grow in intensity, something else happens in that the plane begins to venture... I'm watching the flight path, and the plane begins to venture, and the land we were over begins to disappear. I don't know if you know how the screens work. It does two things in rotating fashion. It zooms in to show the plane big and what's around it, and then zooms out.

Well, at that moment the zoom in/zoom out thing ceased to matter, because all that was around the plane was dark black ocean. Everything that was going on in me just picked up a couple of notches. The turbulence continues to go, and now we have a new little thing the turbulence is doing, where the plane is kind of dropping a little bit, kind of turning like that. You know, you're not setting your drink on the table; you're holding it. It's that kind of turbulence. Again, I'm not exaggerating. There are people who can verify this.

I just want to paint the scene for you. I'm sitting here alone in a dark cabin. Michael is soundly, peacefully asleep next to me. Everybody else is doing their thing. The lights are off. The flight attendant is nowhere to be found. The pilot is not coming on and saying, "Hey, this is what's going on." He's not addressing the obvious, that this is really bad. I'm just sitting here alone, sweating, staring at a screen. There's no land. There's nothing for us to do.

I begin in that moment to think, "What are we going to do?" I start computing all of those things in my mind. I'm thinking, "Well, we're over here. Maybe Iceland is close. Maybe we can do an emergency landing there. If this gets really bad, if this gets worse, can we ditch it in the ocean? Is that little brochure in front of us true that this plane floats?" You're laughing. That's what I'm computing in that moment.

I entered into a new stratosphere of anxiety and fear. I kind of get to the end of myself. I'm drying my hands off. I'm doing everything I can, and I just can't shake it. I can't get out of it. The only thing I know to do is I just wake up Michael. Misery loves company. I was like, "Hey, Michael, wake up." He said, "Hey, man, what's going on?" "Something is wrong." He goes, "What do you mean something is wrong?" I go, "Do you feel this turbulence?" He's like, "Yeah, it's turbulence. It's okay."

I said, "No, I don't think you understand. It's really, really bad. Something is wrong. It's been going this entire time. It has not stopped. Usually the pilot goes and finds smooth air and the turbulence stops. It has been persistent and ever-increasing in intensity." I'm going, "Michael, something is wrong." He goes, "No, man. It's okay. It's turbulence. Look. Nobody else is freaking out. It's okay. Just try and go to sleep. Watch a movie. Distract yourself. The pilots have it. It's okay."

"Michael, I don't think you understand. Something is wrong. What are we going to do?" Abruptly, he turns and looks at me and says, "What do you mean what are we going to do?" In that moment I recognized, "This conversation needs to stop. This is not going to go anywhere helpful. You just need to go back to sleep. I'll handle this." I said, "Okay, fine. Whatever." He goes back to sleep. For the next six hours, pretty much the turbulence persisted until we saw Ireland pop up on the screen. I know that, because, again, I was there with my little friend the screen, just shaking.

What I was experiencing that entire time while he slept... We got to England and I went to bed. I was like, "You guys go have fun. I have to sleep, because I did not sleep on the entire flight." Bloodshot eyes. The whole time, I'm sitting there in this cycle of fear and worry. My response to fear

and worry is I want more control, and when I realize I don't have the control I fear more, and it creates more worry and anxiety. That's the cycle over and over I was experiencing in that moment.

If I can invite us to pop up from that and look at that scene from above, being able to see what's going on, what you see are two very different responses to a shared reality. The reality that Michael and I shared in that moment is that neither one of us were in control. Michael's response to not being in control was trust. "The pilots have it. They know what they're doing. I can trust in that. That's fine. I can be at peace. They have it." That gave him freedom. He could roll over and go to sleep.

My response in that moment was not trust; it was fear. "The pilots don't have it. I'm about to have to go and take the handle and do this." That fear produced a need for control. Michael was grateful that he didn't have control. I grumbled. I reviled. It's interesting. As we get to peer into this portion of our Exodus narrative tonight, we get to peer in from that bird's-eye view of what's going on with the people of Israel.

We know, as we've talked about with this *Exodus* series, that one of the main overarching themes that's continuing to persist throughout this series is that God's way is better than our way, but it's different than our way. In this part of the Exodus narrative, we get to see God's people's response when they're confronted with the reality that God's way is different than their way, the reality that they're not in control. Their response is not gratitude and joy; it's fear and grumbling.

Let's dive in this together. I want to paint the picture a little bit of what has been going on. Since God has rescued his people from slavery, he has been consistently testing his people. We see this several places in chapter 14 alone. I'll just list them out for you. He takes them in odd directions without telling them why. He surprises them with deadly attacks from their enemies after being delivered from slavery. He has them walk through an ocean. He takes them on a geographic route where they are going to lack the necessities they need to survive.

Then right before chapter 16, in the second half of chapter 15, his people run out of water, and the only last water source they find is essentially contaminated. So the context of our story today is a people that had been rescued out of generational slavery under the reign and rule of an oppressive pharaoh. They're miraculously rescued. Not just in *that* they were rescued and delivered but in *how* they were rescued and delivered.

There was no doubt that what God's people had experienced up to this point was nothing short of supernatural. They had every reason to believe that it was God who was doing this. He had not hidden his hands from the rescuing of his people. Israel had been rescued from slavery, they'd been brought through an ocean, and every day they were being guided by a pillar of cloud to remind them in a supernatural way it's God who is guiding them.

In these chapters of Exodus, we see two back-to-back tests of Israel in chapters 16 and 17. It's important for God's people to learn faith amidst struggle. In each of these accounts we're going to see God's people responding in a way that is called *functional atheism*. They're responding in a way where they choose to be under the control of fear and anxiety versus trusting in a sovereign God who's going to do what he said he was going to do.

They choose to believe in their lack of control versus a God who is in complete control. These tests were a part of God's sovereign plan to teach his covenant people how to trust and follow him. When we get to this place in the story of Exodus 16 and 17, the people of Israel have been traveling for about a month now, and they enter into the wilderness, which is a geographic region that is vast, rugged, and harsh.

The commentator Philip Ryken talks about the wilderness this way. He says something like, "If being delivered out of slavery was about Israel's salvation, their time in the wilderness was about their sanctification." This is the place in God's testing where we're going to pick up the story today. Chapter 16 is going to be referenced back to a lot in the Bible. This story, what we're about to step into today, is going to be referenced back to a lot.

As the people were traveling through a region that was sparse of resources, rugged, and vast, quickly, as you can imagine, they ran out of food. Food not being readily available because of the place they're in... You can imagine. These are families all together en masse, moving together, and they run out of food. All of a sudden, this moment becomes grave. It becomes life or death. What is their response? We see what we think their response *should* be in that moment.

Again, if you're to pop up and look back at a bird's-eye view of all that Israel has come through, all the people of God have experienced... God has supernaturally delivered them out of the hands of Egypt. He supernaturally brought them out. He has supernaturally provided in every single way. These people had no reason to believe that God would not show up in this moment and solve this

problem too, but instead of responding in faith, they chose to respond in fear. Let's pick this up in verse 1. We'll read together how they responded.

"They set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt.

And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, and the people of Israel said to them, 'Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.'"

The ungrateful response of the people of Israel in time of testing was not faith; it was fear. It was not trust; it was control. They said, "We wish you'd rather left us in slavery where at least we had plenty of food than to bring us out into this wilderness only to kill us by starvation."

This will become the consistent refrain of God's people when they walk in disobedience to the Lord. Oh, how quickly we forget our chains. Remember, any provision of food under the hand of Pharaoh was not for their flourishing; it was for their enslavement, yet they would rather return to a life of bondage than endure this trial in front of them.

Let me paint the picture this way. Have you ever seen those moments where you have some friends who have little kids and you're in some sort of public situation, maybe out in the foyer, maybe at a restaurant, and one of the parents' young kids decides he's going to jump off into a full-out tantrum? He's starting to get loud.

The parents are kind of dealing with two things in that moment. First, they're trying to deal with their disobedient child they need to correct and squelch this mini rebellion that's happening. The secondary thing that's happening is they're feeling judged by every other parent around them, because their kid is the one who's being loud and obnoxious in that moment. This is one of those situations where everybody dials in, because this is obvious what's happening.

Then, just to take it up a notch, that kid, as he digs his heels in and is in a full-on tantrum, does something utterly disrespectful, disobedient, and embarrassing to that parent, like, let's just say, a kick in the shin, a slap to the face, or yells something really loud and obnoxious at them. In that

moment, everybody around them is now zeroed in on what's happening. Everybody is dialed in to this, and everybody is thinking the same thing. "Is this kid about to get a whopping?"

That's the vantage point we have as we look at this part of the story. The people of Israel had every reason to believe that God would supernaturally show up and provide here too. He had been the whole time, and he promised he would. They had experienced his provision in every way, shape, and form. They had every reason in this moment to believe he would, and the fact that they chose to revile is absurd. Fully expecting God to respond to his disobedient children in wrath, he doesn't. He responds in mercy. Let's look at this in verse 4.

"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.'

So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, 'At evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against the LORD.'"

They named this bread, this provision, *manna* because they literally didn't know what to call it. In these next verses to follow, God is going to give his people specific instructions of how they are to go about gathering this provision. I love how Douglas Stuart describes these instructions. He basically says, "These instructions given by the Lord were not so that he could see if Israel could follow directions but if their hearts were inclined to be his covenant people."

The question God is asking here is, "Will you follow me when my way differs from yours?" This story is an important benchmark in the life of God's people. It's going to be referenced back to over and over again throughout the Old and New Testaments. Manna is going to become an important symbol for God's provision for his people. So I want to dial in here and talk about manna and describe it in two ways. I want to describe manna as *satisfying* and manna as *sanctifying*.

1. *Manna as satisfying*. In these instructions the Lord gives to his people he says, "You're going to go out every day and gather a portion." One omer, one portion, which is exactly what one person needed. It's all they needed. He said, "Gather just enough, not too much." On top of that, he put some guardrails up. He said, "At the end of every day, whatever bread is left over, either a result of the

fact that you didn't trust me and you gathered too much or if you ate to the fill and you were satisfied and there was some left over..."

Whatever bread was left over at the end of the day would rot before the next day. Why? Because he wanted them to go out the next day and trust that manna would be there waiting for them, that he would provide, and again they would get up and gather another portion what they needed for that day. God in that moment was trying to teach his people a new way of understanding provision, that they would have to trust him every day.

From our vantage point, that seems to be pretty easy, seems pretty clear, but if we dive down to the ground level of these people where they're at, this is an agrarian society. His way of provision would be antithetical to their understanding of provision. Why? Because in an agrarian society, when the crops are ready to harvest, you go out and harvest *all* the crops. You pull them in and store them up and make those crops last the rest of the seasons when food isn't going to grow. Why? Because crops don't grow new every day.

You go out and gather those crops and store them up, and then you hope you've grown enough to then be able to last and provide for the rest of the season when the crops aren't going to grow. God is saying, "No, you're going to go out and gather just enough for today, and then tomorrow you're going to wake up and you're going to trust me that there's going to be enough for you waiting there in the next day and the next day."

The test God is putting before his people is that the struggle in trusting in the sovereign grace of God is the struggle between fear and faith. This is that functional atheism we've been talking about. Are they going to believe in the God behind the promises or are they going to believe that their way is better, that they're going to have to take care of it, that it's up to them?

As Charles Spurgeon says, when we can't see his hands, we can trust his heart. God is teaching his people, "When you can't see into tomorrow, when you can't see the manna my hands will lay down, you can trust my heart, that I love you, I've got you, and I'll be there too." For 40 years in the wilderness, God provides every day exactly what his children need to flourish, because God's provision is not about our success; it's about our flourishing.

God wasn't teaching his people to succeed when times get tough. He was teaching his people what it means to flourish under his leadership. Success is wrapped up in our ability to accomplish

something. It's about achieving a certain aim. Flourishing is about growing healthy in an intentional environment. We want to achieve and succeed because it's wrapped up in our ability to do, but God is teaching his people that he desires them to flourish and grow healthy through what he provides. Ultimately, everything we can do and muster will leave us wanting at some level. It's God's provision that satisfies. Manna is satisfying.

2. *Manna as sanctifying*. Moses, when later reflecting on this time in the wilderness, describes it this way in Deuteronomy 8. **"And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.**

And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."

What God is doing in that moment is not just filling their stomachs; he's shepherding their hearts and teaching them to trust him every day, because the God who is worthy to be trusted for bread is worthy to be obeyed. I love the way Charles Spurgeon describes this scene of manna.

He says, "God desired, then, to teach them, himself, by the gift of the manna. And he taught them, first, his care over them, that he was their God and that they were his people and that he would lay himself out to provide for them. Think of the care that God had over them, over each one of them, for each man had his own [portion] of manna. No woman, no child was forgotten.

Every morning there was sufficient quantity for every man, according to his needs for that day. There was no more and there was never any less, so carefully did God watch over each individual. The individuality of the divine love is a great part of the sweetness of it. God thinks of every separate child of his as much as if he had only that one.

The multiplicity of his elect does not divide the loaf of his affection. He has an infinite affection for each one, and he will take care of the details of each chosen life. He will see your [portion] filled, precisely, to the ounce! He will give you all you can possibly need, but he will give you nothing that you can lay by to minister to your pride."

"The multiplicity of his elect does not divide the loaf of his affection." The manna from heaven was for God's people another reminder to them of his love for them through his glorious salvation. They did nothing to earn it, and they received it completely apart from their labor. They had to trust God for it, and they experienced God's love for them in it. In John, chapter 6, after the miracle of the loaves and fish, Jesus summarizes and applies this manna story to us in this way:

"Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Jesus then said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' They said to him, 'Sir, give us this bread always.' Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.'"

Manna was sanctifying, because at the end of the day, when all of those leftover crumbs began to rot away, every person was confronted with the same question...*Will you trust him for tomorrow?* Remember, the question God is asking here is not what lengths his people are willing to go to survive, not if they can survive when times get tough. If humanity has demonstrated anything, it's that we're willing to go through all kinds of lengths to survive. God was testing if their hearts were inclined to follow him.

This whole story is foreshadowing that God provides salvation for his children, fully, freely, finally, and forever in Christ. For those who trust in Christ, his grace is fresh to us every morning. In the next chapter, we see again Israel facing a similar interaction, a similar test, when they get to the place where they run out of water. Again, given every reason to respond in this moment in faith, they respond in fear. They begin to revile back again when they're in a place where they don't have any water.

God responds once again not in wrath but in mercy. This time, he does it a little bit differently. He tells Moses, "Hey, I want you to take the staff and strike the rock. I want you to strike it one time, and from the rock I'm going to flow water freely to provide for my children." So Moses takes the staff and strikes the rock, and from the rock water flows freely to provide for them in that moment. God chose to strike the rock and not his children, foreshadowing the day when he would send the Son to be struck once and for all for our salvation. First Corinthians 10 describes it this way:

"For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ."

The question you might be asking is, "What, then, does this story mean for us, Pastor?" I'm so glad you asked that. I'm going to share with you guys a story about Abraham Lincoln. I'll just read it to you. It's beautiful. It basically says, "There's a story about Abraham Lincoln visiting a slave auction. Upon arriving, he saw a young slave girl up on the block. Moved with compassion, he bid and won her. After purchasing her, Lincoln told the disbelieving young girl that she was free.

In her surprise she said, 'What does this mean?' Lincoln replied, 'It means you're free.' She said, 'Does this mean I can say whatever I want to say?' He said, 'Yes, my dear. You can say whatever you want to say.' She said, 'Does this mean I can be whatever I want to be?' He said, 'Yes, you can be whatever you want to be.' She said, 'Does this mean I can go wherever I want to go?' He said, 'Yes, you can go wherever you want to go.' And tears streaming down this little girl's face, she said, 'Then I will go with you.'"

The driving belief behind the American dream is that we are in control, that it's up to us, that we need to get all we can for us in the here and now. The problem with that is that's antithetical to the Bible that says following Jesus is about surrender and not about control. When Jesus says, "Follow me," implicit in that command is an understanding of his lordship. When all his people are standing around and telling Jesus they want to follow him, he says, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord' if you don't even do what I say?"

The reason, ultimately, that we grumble at our lack of control is because we want Jesus to save us; we don't want to follow him. Church, I want to be faithful to beat this drum every time in front of you. I firmly believe the reason so many Christians are disappointed, frustrated, or bored is because we are more about God's gifts than God's glory. Jesus said following him means dying and denying. We die to ourselves and deny our wants and desires, because what we find on the road with him is far better.

If you spend any time in the New Testament, you'll see really quickly that following Christ isn't easy. In fact, when all of those people are gathering around and telling Jesus they want to follow him, his response to them is, "The birds have nests, the foxes have holes, but the Son of Man will have

nowhere to lay his head. Following me might mean you're homeless tonight." Following Christ is about surrendering our control and trusting in his provision. His provision is sanctifying, but it is ultimately satisfying. Let's pray.

Father in heaven, I am grateful for the truth of your Word, that wherever we find ourselves this morning, in a place of doubt, fear, worry, whatever are those cavities in our hearts that we have not given over to you, we trust that you'll provide for that too. All of us have those places in our lives right now that we can say this is real estate in our lives we have not given to you, that we have not trusted, "Yes, you will provide for that too, " yet we're reminded this morning the individuality of your divine love toward us.

As we prayed this morning, that every person in this room sitting in that chair would know your love is not divided amongst us but is infinite for each one of us. Father, we would just sit in that this morning, and whatever we have in our lives right now, that by your Spirit's power you would allow us to lay those at your feet and trust the God who loves us will provide for this too. We ask that in Christ's name for his sake, amen.