



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

July 28, 2024

Pastor Phil Birner

10<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson/Sermon Text: [Exodus 16:1-15](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 145 CW

Second Lesson: [2 Corinthians 9:8-11](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 6:35-44](#)

### Meaningful Ministry God Meets Our Needs to Meet Others' Needs

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.

Some might get the impression that all we talk about here in church are spiritual things, thinking *where is the here and now stuff, real life?* This morning all three Scripture readings would answer otherwise. (1) We have the beautiful story of Jesus' concern for the bodily needs of those uninvited guests that had gathered around Him and Jesus proceeds to feed them all. We complain about having to set up catering for about 100 people or so. Here Jesus is feeding a small town of over 5,000 people. (2) In our Epistle lesson Paul told the Corinthian congregation, "You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion" as he encourages the Corinthians to take that offering for famine relief. (3) And then there is our Old Testament reading this morning that outdoes both Gospel and Epistle readings. We hear how the Lord takes care of the needs of over two million people and not just for a buffet but for the next 40 years. The story of God's giving of the manna and quail impressively shows that our God is very much concerned about the here and now. This particular Old Testament text has a definite emphasis on that, the here and now. But in this story, there is something that shows a larger element in all of that. That is this term "the glory of the Lord." That's what I would like to spend a little bit of time looking at this morning, looking at indeed, if you will, beholding the glory of the Lord—the glory of the Lord as He takes care of us every day, but more importantly, the glory of the Lord in His continuing, on-going concern for our eternal welfare.

Let's just get a little bit of the background/context of [Exodus 16](#). After ten stunning plagues, after the miraculous crossing over the Red Sea by the children of Israel, after

the humbling of the self-proclaimed god-like figure of Pharaoh, after the slaved people's liberation from one of the world's great powers, after all that it appears that the party is over. It's not what the children of Israel expected. The travel brochures didn't tell anything about being hungry and thirsty in the desert. With no food, no water, their memory kind of starts to go a little bit wonky. In their former slave home, the self-described house of bondage, the land of death, it's suddenly starting to look like (as their memory recalls it) the Club Med. The Club Med with never-ending buffets of unlimited meats and vegetables there. To be sure, they are scared and definitely they are hungry and thirsty, but now we find the children of Israel sort of requesting God to do a do-over. They want God to press the rewind button so that they now can go back to the land of Egypt.

That's where we stumble into probably one of the most theologically loaded verses in all of Holy Scripture, [Exodus 16:10](#). As the children of Israel are looking toward the west, back to Egypt, we are told they looked toward the desert, the other way. **...they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the Lord appearing in a cloud.** The most immediate indication of this glory of the Lord comes in the form of manna. Manna gets its self-described name from the question, "What is it?" When the children of Israel saw it, they said to one another in their Hebrew vernacular, "Manna." "What's this?" You can almost see them kind of crinkling their noses at what they were looking at, like a bunch of kids. "What is this?!" **"It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat"** is Moses' simple reply to them. Never mind at this moment the Lord God has moved into super action to give over two million people in the middle of nowhere, in the barren wilderness that can barely sustain jackals and scorpions, the Lord gives them nourishing food to eat. Not just for one meal, but now for the next 40 years that they will be in that wilderness. They are like, "So what?"

When it comes to the daily providential care of our Lord, we too oftentimes act just like the children of Israel. Just as the ungrateful, undeserving children of Israel grumbling and complaining received manna from heaven, our God also takes care of us. The fact that we, too, utterly depend on our Lord to give us that food is sometimes something that we do not recognize very well. For example, that bread in the peanut butter and jelly sandwich, the one that we scrounge together because we were hungry right now, we would have rather had something else but unfortunately we were too lazy to put the other stuff together that we had and we wanted to eat now, that bread, where did that come from? Yeah, I know, you went to the store and you bought a loaf of bread for \$3.00. But where did that bread come from? Obviously the farmer weighed into that equation as he cultivates and sows and harvests and gets some return off of that. There is the processing that goes into that wheat, the baker who bakes the bread, the retail merchant that gets his cut of the action. But how much do you actually allow for the actual food product, the wheat itself? The thing is, not one single cent. The wheat itself is a gift of God, a free, unmerited gift from that third day of Creation, if you will, right up until our present day. All the invented power of the world cannot make a machine into

which you dump some CO<sub>2</sub>, shine the sun on it, add some water, and out the other end comes wheat. Or even for that matter, the sunshine, the air, the atmosphere, the rain, all of that is from our generous God, and it is His free gift to us. This “what is it,” this manna sustained the children of Israel in their journey to the Promised Land. That’s two million people that God is taking care of, but that’s really only just a little bit of the picture.

The big picture, of course, is God is lining up everything so that His promised Savior would be born one day in that Promised Land. The promise that God had made way back when, to Abraham, the promise that God was now working on as over two million of Abraham's descendants are being taken care of in the wilderness—that was not a miracle that was a momentary stopgap. It was the covenant Lord God continuing His providential interest of carrying out salvation, and not just for the descendants of Abraham, not just for those two million children of Israel but for every last single one of us.

I said [Exodus 16:10](#) is one of the more stunning, theologically loaded verses in the Bible. This is the first place that the term “the glory of the Lord” actually occurs. It’s not that it hasn’t happened before. Think of Moses encountering the burning bush in the wilderness. That was the glory of the Lord and of course, at that point in time God is setting into action His whole program to release the children of Israel, to bring them back into the Promised Land. We think of the pillar of light, the pillar of cloud that guided the children of Israel across the Red Sea and then proceeded to turn around and confuse and scatter and eventually drown the armies of Pharaoh in that Red Sea. But here in [Exodus 16:10](#), we actually have this thing getting a name, “the glory of the Lord,” and it almost becomes a technical term. It’s a term that is going to appear again and again throughout the Book of Exodus. The glory of the Lord, as God intervenes into human history, and He continues to conduct His saving actions and His saving purposes. We will see that term “the glory of the Lord” occurring again and again in the Old Testament.

But where that term reaches its culmination, its climax, is in its first and its only place in the New Testament. In the New Testament we see that phrase, “the glory of the Lord,” occurs only one time. Where? It takes place in Luke’s Gospel. It takes place in the Christmas story where the humbled shepherds get to see it in action. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, appeared to the shepherds, and the glory of the Lord shone around them. ([Luke 2:9](#)) One doesn’t need to be a theological expert to see what saving action God was bringing into place at that point in time with the birth of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

Like the children of Israel, deep down we believers, living in the here and now in this world, sort of wish that the Kingdom of God hear that was some sort of Disney-ized Magic Kingdom kind of a place. We sort of wish while God was putting His saving

actions in place for us, while we are here in this world, that the world would always be a clean place, the trash would always be out of sight, at night the whole place would light up with nice twinkling lights and all of that. But the sad news is that oftentimes it is a wilderness kind of place that we'd much rather, like the children of Israel, detour around.

The cross, though, where that newborn Savior eventually ended up is that ray of hope, that really kind of quirky ray of hope that shines through in this world's multiple wildernesses of hurt and suffering and, of course, sin—sin that causes it all. What a comfort to know that our Savior (that plan of action that God put in place) has taken care of that sin, has forgiven us our sins—our sins of grumbling and complaining, not thinking that we are being taken care of in a nice way.

I venture to say that as most of us are going home today, we're not going home to eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. There is probably a little bit better of a meal being planned today. Indeed, our Lord does take care of us in many wonderful ways. More often than many wonderful ways as there are the normal and the mundane sorts of ways that we are taken care of. And as our Lord does take care of us, let us keep in mind how it all plays into the big picture, God's real purpose for us, as He gives us this time of grace in this world, to come to Him. Yes, to be with Him in the here and now, but more importantly, to keep us safely with Him forever in heaven. Indeed, behold the glory of the Lord. Amen.

***And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*** [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.