

20th SEPT SERVICE

Welcome & Announcements

Call to worship Psalm 105

Praise Song 'Goodness of God'

Prayer

Old Testament Reading- Exodus 16:2-16a

Children's talk

Offering

New Testament reading- John 6:43-51

Sermon & Video

Prayers for others

Congregational Hymn 'Amazing Grace'

Blessing

Call to worship- **Psalm 105; 1-6**

¹ Give thanks to the LORD and proclaim his greatness.
Let the whole world know what he has done.

² Sing to him; yes, sing his praises.

Tell everyone about his wonderful deeds.

³ Exult in his holy name;

rejoice, you who worship the LORD.

⁴ Search for the LORD and for his strength;
continually seek him.

⁵ **Remember the wonders he has performed,
his miracles, and the rulings he has given,**

⁶ you children of his servant Abraham,
you descendants of Jacob, his chosen ones

Exodus 16:2-16 In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. ³ The Israelites said to them, 'If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat round pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.'

⁴ Then 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. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. ⁵ On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.'

⁶ So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, 'In the evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of Egypt, ⁷ and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?' ⁸ Moses also 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 has

heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD.'

⁹ Then Moses told Aaron, 'Say to the entire Israelite community, "Come before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling."' "

¹⁰ While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked towards the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud.

¹¹ The LORD said to Moses, ¹² 'I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, "At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God."' "

¹³ That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. ¹⁴ When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. ¹⁵ When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, 'What is it?' For they did not know what it was.

Moses said to them, 'It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat. ¹⁶ This is what the LORD has commanded: "Everyone is to gather as much as they need.

John 6:43-51

⁴³ "Stop grumbling among yourselves," Jesus answered. ⁴⁴ "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me. ⁴⁶ No one has seen the

Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷ Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. ⁵⁰ But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

SERMON It was only when I actually visited Israel 2 years ago that I really began to get a sense of how inhospitable & challenging the wilderness could be...**SLIDE** We were on our way down towards the Dead sea...in an air conditioned coach , we were comfortable & relaxed but as I looked out the window at the harsh landscape I began to understand in a fresh way just how desperately difficult it must have been for people to live & travel through such an environment...And we were only at the beginning of the wilderness... I knew that if we were to travel any further... the landscape would continue to get drier & harsher... something akin to a desert... a dry desolate place... **Nothing like what we are used** to here in wet N Ireland!

SLIDE And maybe those were the type of words that the Israelites used as they followed Moses into the wilderness all those years ago after God brought them out of Egypt... They had been freed from slavery... they had seen God's miraculous rescue at the sea of Reeds...when the waters were drawn back ...**And God made a way where there was no way.** And yet at the end of chapter 15 of Exodus & here in Chp 16 what see is that the Israelites were saying... This isn't what we are used too.. This is too difficult... *'If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat round pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.'* Yes this isn't what we were used too...ahhh Egypt, it was actually so good, we had all the food we wanted...meat & everything. REALLY..?

You know I get mine out of the drawer sometimes... I dust them down & put them on & they always feel like comfortable. I would guess that many of you also have a pair of these that you put on from time to time, **SLIDE** for whether we have perfect eyesight or not most of seem to have a pair of rose coloured spectacles, don't we? Yes it can be easy to slip into an attitude that looks back on a particular time, event or place & forget the reality of it, instead we remember only the bits we like or misremembering entirely.

As Moses led the Israelites deeper into the wilderness & they faced shortages of water & then food, we read in our passage how quickly they forgot the truth about Egypt.. the slavery, the abuse...the death, how quickly they forgot only remembering what they want..the meat, the food But forgetting the deadly oppression. Yes in their anxiety over where they where & the problems they faced they Once more, just like the time at the sea, wanted to do a U turn & head back to Egypt they were ready to walk away from God

As human beings we can often have short memories... I know how easy it can be for me to forget answers to prayer as soon as I face another problem or indeed come into a nice comfortable time... I can forget what God has done... I can forget His mercy & deliverance... So part of what we do in our Church services & particularly at communion is to just remind ourselves...of what God has done for us, for you & me.. We take time to remember that God is our deliverer... that through Jesus' death & resurrection we have not just been forgiven, but we have been set free from the realm of sin & death..**SLIDE** as we come to worship God this morning

we remember that we all need amazing grace, that we needed deliverance...that the chains of sin are real & strong & that no matter what people may tell themselves we are all in need of a deliverer... Jesus. We remind ourselves of these truths this morning.. But of course we shouldn't just rely on Church services to stir our memories..we must turn to the bible regularly saturating ourselves in the truth of what God has done for us...We perhaps use a journal or prayer diary.. to quickly note down those answered prayers, those difficult journeys that God has led us through...& so we remind ourselves of the truth, of what is real..that we were slaves to sin... destined for death... but God rescued us in Christ.

What makes Christianity different from all the other religions of the world? The story is told of how years ago that very question was discussed at a conference. Some people argued that Christianity is unique in teaching that God became man. But someone objected, saying that other religions teach similar doctrines. What about the resurrection? No, it was argued, other faiths believe that the dead rise again. The discussion grew heated...Then the Christian professor & author C. S. Lewis, born down the road in east Belfast, came in late, sat down, & asked, "What's the rumpus about?" When he learned that it was a debate about the uniqueness of Christianity he quickly commented *Oh, that's easy. It's grace.*"

Yes as the people in the wilderness again grumble & complain against God...They forget His delivering hand on their lives & as we hear in vs11 God was more than aware of their grumbling forgetful hearts & yet He moves in grace to provide for them... quail in the evening flying straight into their camp & in the morning flakes like frost on the

ground... **manna** that could be made into bread to feed everyone.. God's constant faithful provision right there in the midst of the wilderness...despite their grumbling & complaining, God provided all they needed ... God acted in mercy & love ..He provided for His people even though they didn't deserve it... isn't that amazing grace...?

Yes there in the harshness of the wilderness, a place where the people couldn't do anything for themselves they encountered God & enjoyed His provision... God provided their daily bread...& so provided an enduring sign of His goodness & faithfulness... a sign that He would continue to make a way... So perhaps it's not surprising that when we turn to the life of Jesus... that only one miracle is recorded in all 4... Jesus feeding of a hungry crowd of over 5000 people with daily bread...**SLIDE** & as we see in our passage from John...the gospel writer is quick to pick up the similarities between the crowd that Jesus faced all those years later & the people of Israel during the Exodus... the grumbling the demanding.. the looking for what they wanted... bread for stomachs.. & perhaps a new military leader they could rally behind... And so they were sadly missing the even deeper provision that God was laying out in front of them.. *the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die.* vs50

Yes this morning we remember that God provides for us physically but also in deeper ways..for God cares for our souls our whole lives not just our bodies.. Is it always easy to TRUST God in the wilderness, No for our minds & emotions naturally run riot when things get difficult... But God understands & He is Faithfull.. we watch a video

PRAYERS- God who provides ..we praise You this morning that You care for us enough that You not only come to rescue us in the darkest of times... But that You are faithful enough to care for us everyday providing our daily bread. God of tremendous grace we thank you for this undeserved mercy ... & we ask You to forgive us for those times when we have grumbled & doubted your care.

So this day we bring to You our world... a world where still today nearly 700 million people still grow hungry.. God we pray that amid all the necessary talk about Covid 19 that we, and others, would not forget the other troubles in our world. Particularly this morning we pray for the people in developing nations.. but also in our own nation that are struggling to make ends meet... & relying on foodbanks or sadly going to bed hungry.

Lord forgive us & help us have the privilege of sharing what you have given us with others...

We pray too Lord for those who because of bereavement or illness or loneliness or any other issue that they feel like they are walking through a wilderness...

Heavenly Father, may they know this day that they are not alone...may they feel Your precious providing presence.. & again we pray that You would give us the privilege of playing our part in sharing Your love with others...

And so we remember in prayer those from our Church family & others who have requested our prayers this day.

We remember the family & close friends of Tina Donaldson whose funeral was yesterday.

We also hold before God the **parents of baby Ross & Jenny** who both died after being born 15 weeks premature. We ask God to surround them in His loving care.

We continue praying for **Timothy Harte & Daniel Kidson** asking that God continues to work miracles of healing in their lives.

We pray too for **Paul McDowell...Percy Foster... Jean Woods... Jerry McHaffee... Sarah..... George McKee... Bernie McKee..... Anna Cooper.... Trevor... Susanne** after a bad accident.. for 10 year old **Leo** following his surgery... & for all those connected to our Church family & those we know who are in need of God's power & peace in their situation

We finish with the Lord's Prayer

Hymn - Amazing Grace

Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas Grace that taught my heart to fear,
And Grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that Grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come.

'Tis Grace hath brought me safe thus far
And Grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me.
His Word my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

When we've been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.

Songwriters: John Newton

As we were leaving the dead sea on the edge of the wilderness I looked around again & thought..I'm glad I came just to see this & float in the very salty mineral water... but truth be told... I don't think I will want to ever return... because it's just too hot & desolate... it really does feel like a dead place... Yes the wilderness is far from pleasant ... but