

Bible readings

Exodus 16: 1-8

16 The whole Israelite community set out from Elim, and on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had left Egypt, they came to the desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai. ² There in the desert they all complained to Moses and Aaron ³ and said to them, “We wish that the LORD had killed us in Egypt. There we could at least sit down and eat meat and as much other food as we wanted. But you have brought us out into this desert to starve us all to death.”

⁴ The LORD said to Moses, “Now I am going to cause food to rain down from the sky for all of you. The people must go out every day and gather enough for that day. In this way I can test them to find out if they will follow my instructions. ⁵ On the sixth day they are to bring in twice as much as usual and prepare it.”

⁶ So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “This evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of Egypt. ⁷ In the morning you will see the dazzling light of the LORD's presence. He has heard your complaints against him—yes, against him, because we are only carrying out his instructions.” ⁸ Then Moses said, “It is the LORD who will give you meat to eat in the evening and as much bread as you want in the morning, because he has heard how much you have complained against him. When you complain against us, you are really complaining against the LORD.”

Matthew 6:25-34

²⁵ “This is why I tell you: do not be worried about the food and drink you need in order to stay alive, or about clothes for your body. After all, isn't life worth more than food? And isn't the body worth more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds: they do not plant seeds, gather a harvest and put it in barns; yet your Father in heaven takes care of them! Aren't you worth much more than birds? ²⁷ Can any of you live a bit longer by worrying about it?

²⁸ “And why worry about clothes? Look how the wild flowers grow: they do not work or make clothes for themselves. ²⁹ But I tell you that not even King Solomon with all his wealth had clothes as beautiful as one of these flowers. ³⁰ It is God who clothes the wild grass—grass that is here today and gone tomorrow, burned up in the oven. Won't he be all the more sure to clothe you? What little faith you have!

³¹ “So do not start worrying: ‘Where will my food come from? or my drink? or my clothes?’ ³² (These are the things the pagans are always concerned about.) Your Father in heaven knows that you need all these things. ³³ Instead, be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God and with what he requires of you, and he will provide you with all these other things. ³⁴ So do not worry about tomorrow; it will have enough worries of its own. There is no need to add to the troubles each day brings.

Sermon

Learning to walk

It is hard work for a little one to learn to walk. It takes a lot of effort, a lot of falling and getting up, but with the love and help of the parent, children do learn to walk, step by step. We all had to learn and of course we don't remember that stage of our lives, but the one who taught us, our mum or dad, grandparent, they do.

In the bible, God remembers how he taught Israel to walk. He says:

*Yet I was the one who taught Israel to walk.
I took my people up in my arms,
but they did not acknowledge that I took care of them.
⁴ I drew them to me with affection and love.
I picked them up and held them to my cheek;
I bent down to them and fed them. (Hosea 11: 3-4)*

The story that Andrew read, is about how God taught Israel to walk. Israel had been slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, for years, for generations, until God had led them out of slavery, through Moses. That was when God taught them to walk with Him. They experienced that God made a path through the sea, so they could cross it. When they all had reached the other side,

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD:

*"I will sing to the LORD, because he has won a glorious victory;
he has thrown the horses and their riders into the sea.
² The LORD is my strong defender;
he is the one who has saved me.
He is my God, and I will praise him,
my father's God, and I will sing about his greatness. (Exodus 15:1-2)*

But soon the praise stopped. It stopped when they came to the desert of Sin, between Elim and Sinai. There the praise turned into complaining.

And then, this happens: while they are grumbling, the past is idealized:

We wish that the LORD had killed us in Egypt. There we could at least sit down and eat meat and as much other food as we wanted. But you have brought us out into this desert to starve us all to death."(Exodus 16:2-3)

When the present is hard, the future unknown, that is what humans do. Always that tension between the trouble of today and the uncertain perspective of tomorrow. Even though we know that tomorrow; the future lies in God's hands. The God who doesn't let go what His own Hand once began. The God we worship here, now, every Sunday, while you children and young people have your own worship in a different place.

When Israel was in the desert, they remembered their slavery as the good old days. The suffering... it seems to be forgotten.

Meanwhile Moses stands between God and the grumbling Israelites. 'I wish they had trust in You, Lord!' Of course, that would help him, Moses, God's chosen leader for Israel. It would make Moses' mission a bit easier, if Israel trusted in God. There would not be so much tension. The less tension, the better for everyone, including Israel themselves. But most importantly, faith and trust in God, that would serve Him. And that is what it is about.

'I know Moses, I know...I will give them bread, from heaven; in the heart of the desert, I will give them bread.'

Now, when there has been frost overnight, you can see in the morning something like frozen dew. That was what covering the camp of the Israelites...They wondered what it was.

'This is bread from God'. It was called manna. The manna was as sweet as honey. There was plenty, but they were not allowed to take as much as they wanted. They were allowed to take from it, only what they needed for the day. Nothing more, nothing less. So, God gave, for them to receive, but within His boundaries. They had to learn to receive, to learn not to get carried away by the *gift*, but receive while remaining focused on the *Giver* of the gift. The instructions God gave were not carried out by all Israelites. Obedience to God; trust in Him had to be learned, by Israel in the desert: step by step And so the desert was a school that taught faith.

Psalm 119:103 says

*How sweet is the taste of your instructions—
sweeter even than honey!
¹⁰⁴ I gain wisdom from your laws.*

The passage that Harry read gives us God's instruction, through Jesus. Jesus says here: 'Don't let your worries be bigger than your trust and faith in God. He is not saying that there are no worries or that God doesn't take our worries seriously. He does, otherwise He wouldn't say

*So do not worry about tomorrow; it will have enough worries of its own.
(Matthew 6:34)*

An old man said, 'I am an old man and have known big problems, but most of them never happened.'

Jesus encourages us to take what the day brings to you. Do what you have to do, while standing firm in faith. That is how you give God the chance to teach you more and more about Him. And so, only so, you grow more in faith, and learn to walk closer and closer with Him, through all the things that happen: the good and the bad. You learn to walk a steady walk The more chance you give Him, the more He can show Himself. In His strength, you can then face challenges.

When Jesus says that we must not worry about tomorrow, He doesn't mean that we should live without care.

He doesn't mean that we should stop doing shopping for the next day or week. He doesn't mean that we don't need to prepare for tasks, for the following day or weeks.

He means that He wants us to know that we live in His grace and care, which give inner peace and calm. Then we can live without tension, nervousness...And so, instead of being slaves of our worries, we are servants of God.

Israel received the sweet manna from God; bread from heaven. They were only allowed to take what they need for the day, and not to worry about what they needed for the next day.

When we will have communion, we take bread, and as we do, we think of Jesus's body. For Jesus, who also came from heaven said:

'I am the bread of life...' (John 6:35)

When everything was said and done on earth, He had His last Supper with His disciples. What they celebrated was that God had led out of slavery, after Pharaoh had opposed Him, many times. God had responded to Pharaoh's opposition with different plagues. The last one was that God sent an angel to kill every firstborn of the Egyptians. The Israelites were therefore instructed by God to slaughter a lamb and to smear its blood on the doorposts. That was the sign that it was the house of an Israelite, so that the angel of death knew he had to pass it.

When Jesus had the last supper with his disciples, He remembered, with His disciples, that last evening in Egypt.

As He was eating this meal with His disciples, Jesus knew that *He* was about to be that slaughtered lamb. Still, although knowing that He was about to suffer and die, He praised God for who He was and remains...

So, whatever our worries are today, let us now too now praise God.

Amen