

November 19 – “Never Enough”

Israelites in the desert

Numbers 11:4-6

4 The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, “If only we had meat to eat!

5 We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic.

6 But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!”

Special Music: Give Me Jesus

Tori Kelly

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZEx3Gd-gA4>



JUST ENOUGH

**My Awesome Creator,
Teach me to rethink my needs,
Reverse my desires
And turn them into seeds
Of satisfied, reclassified
Realities of Redemption.**

**Fill my cup
With just enough
To satisfy my thirst,
And with what remains
Let me bless another,
Thirsty sister or needy brother.**

**Gift to me
Your bread of life,
Let me be satisfied
With the crumbs and crust
That you have supplied,
So that I can feed
The need of those you have entrusted
To my care.**

**Allow me to know my needs,
And let them not exceed
The boundaries
Required by my blood and bones,
Nor my mind and heart of stone,
Forgive my wants**

**Causing me to flaunt
My manmade treasures,
Exposing my greed
Which is indeed
The essence of
The hellish, selfish nomenclature
Revealing my self-gratifying nature
Which compares my righteousness
With my neighbor's rightfulness,
And fails.**

**Help me see
That what I have
Is what I need.
And all else given me
Is for me to feed the souls
Of those you place within my reach.**

**Thank you for just enough
To keep me well
And just enough
For me to dwell
Forever in your arms.**

Can anyone tell me who Laurence J. Peter is and what significance he has on our lives today? He's not a great theologian, although there are those in the business world that would argue with me on that point. Nor is he a well-known politician. To the best of my knowledge, he has never played an instrument or been an artist of any consequence. He is not an inventor, engineer, or architect. But he did write a book that was published back in 1969 by William Morrow and Company. He and his fellow researcher, Raymond Hull, developed a unique principle that pertains not just to business, but reflects the way almost every society on our planet develops. Whether you agree or disagree, "The Peter Principle" is one of the highest selling books of all time and it is built on a single adage: "People in a hierarchy tend to rise to a level of respective incompetence." Stated another way, a person that adequately performs a given task or job is often promoted until they reach a point that they will they ultimately fail. It is more of a reflection of the way our society works than the actual individuals involved. I'm not sure when we, as a society, developed the concept that a person who is great at their job will automatically adapt and perform even greater in a totally different role.

The principal hasn't changed with time, and the repercussions can be costly to a company, program, government agency, military, religious institution, or any other organization with a built-in hierarchy. Let's face it. We all know people who have failed at what they are doing, and society is great about punishing them. But we often forget that the person did a good job in the position they had before the one in which they failed. We forget their previous successes. We judge the whole of the person on their most recent perceived failure, especially when we haven't even taken a beat to let time measure their success or failure.

Case in point. Jimbo Fisher was recently fired from his position as head coach at Texas A & M. Mr. Fisher came into the position with an awesome resume' where he

turned the football program Florida State University into a winning team. But his performance at A & M was so lackluster that the school pulled the plug on his contract early. It cost the school 75 million dollars to pull that plug. How can any school get themselves in a position where it costs them 75 million dollars to rectify a perceived mistake? This is a prime example of “The Peter Principal.”

How many CEOs have we watched rise to the top level of major companies only to burn the company to the ground through their perceived incompetence? How many politicians have we seen succeed at the polls only to fail miserably once they are in office? How many religious leaders have we watched who came from humble beginnings only to rise to a level where they failed both themselves and their congregations through questionable moral practices, radical theological changes, or unfavorable business practices?

“The Peter Principle” is an excellent observation, but it does have a major flaw. There are times when the failure of a leader is not due to their lack of leadership skills, but actually a combination of many elements including unanticipated disasters (like COVID), lack of available qualified support personnel, disruption of a supply chain, defective materials or questionable character, and so many more. Often the decision to rid an organization of its leader is based on subjective reference and public opinion. But the truth is, swapping out the leader is just an attempt to find a leader with a different approach to the same problems. And there is no guarantee of success. “The Peter Principle” still applies. The next leader may approach the problems differently and still fail to deliver. And once again it can be very costly for the organization.

The Israelites are wandering in the wilderness. God is miraculously meeting their needs every day by supplying them with manna and fresh water. But after a while, this miracle from God starts to cause dissention.

4 The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, “If only we had meat to eat!

5 We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic.

6 But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!”

Cooking as a bachelor can be a struggle. Trying to make single portions can be an arduous task, so I often have to prepare larger meals and eat leftovers for several days. I don't mind leftovers. As a matter of fact, I generally enjoy them. But I am like everyone else, eating the same thing day after day can be monotonous and even discouraging. So, I do my best to have choices by swapping out vegetables and making other dishes out of leftovers.

The Israelites were doing their best not to let the monotony of the manna and water get to them. I understand this. Numbers 11:7-9 tells us this:

7 The manna was like coriander seed and looked like resin.

8 The people went around gathering it, and then ground it in a hand mill or crushed it in a mortar. They cooked it in a pot or made it into loaves. And it tasted like something made with olive oil.

9 When the dew settled on the camp at night, the manna also came down.

The manna had grown unappetizing to look at. It had an odd texture. The Israelites boiled it, baked it, grilled it, crushed it, and did everything they could to give themselves a little variety. But it was getting to them. They had developed a “Reluctant Gratitude” toward the manna. They started remembering that when they were slaves in Egypt at least they had fish, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic. And so, once again they

plant their discouragement squarely on Moses' shoulders expecting him to bring them some relief.

I just love this next part of the story:

10 Moses heard the people of every family wailing at the entrance to their tents. The Lord became exceedingly angry, and Moses was troubled.

11 He asked the Lord, "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me?"

12 Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their ancestors?"

13 Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, 'Give us meat to eat!'"

14 I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me.

15 If this is how you are going to treat me, please go ahead and kill me—if I have found favor in your eyes—and do not let me face my own ruin."

Moses is just as frustrated as the people he is leading. He can't stand that they are constantly complaining about anything and everything. They can't seem to find satisfaction that their needs are being met. It is almost as if they are looking for things to complain about. In a desert devoid of the comforts of both Egypt and the Promised Land, they have food and water brought about by miracles, and yet they keep complaining, thinking that Moses should fix it. Moses has the magic staff. Why doesn't he just pound it on the ground and turn the rocks to meat? Moses is tired of listening to it. Nothing seems to satisfy them. He finds himself caught in the middle of an

impossible situation. On one side the Israelites are constantly complaining about how they think God is treating them, and on the other side he feels like God himself is dumping on him. Just like Elijah in the wilderness he cries out **“If this is how you are going to treat me, please go ahead and kill me – if I have found favor in your eyes – and do not let me face my own ruin.”** Let’s face it, he never asked to be put in this position and he feels like this is a lose – lose proposition for him. If only he could get the Israelites to realize how good they actually have it, never having to worry about food or water.

But God hears Moses and he feels his pain. He understands the position that Moses has been placed in. God has Moses choose seventy of the Israelite elders to lighten his load, helping him by placing some of the Spirit found in Moses into these leaders. They will share the burden with Moses so that he doesn’t have to do it all alone.

But God realizes that it isn’t enough. The people will still complain. So, he gives them just what they want. Meat. And God gives it to them reluctantly with this caveat:

18 “Tell the people: ‘Consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow, when you will eat meat. The Lord heard you when you wailed, “If only we had meat to eat! We were better off in Egypt!” Now the Lord will give you meat, and you will eat it.

19 You will not eat it for just one day, or two days, or five, ten or twenty days,

20 but for a whole month—until it comes out of your nostrils and you loathe it—because you have rejected the Lord, who is among you, and have wailed before him, saying, “Why did we ever leave Egypt?”

Be careful what you ask for, especially when you have everything you need. “You will not eat it for just one day, or two days, or five, ten, or twenty days, but for a whole month

- until it comes out of your nostrils and you loathe it.” God may give you just what you are asking for and you may regret it.

That is the nature of Reluctant Gratitude. That is the nature of what happens when we become dissatisfied with God’s will. He knows what is best for us even if we don’t know it. When we decide that we know better than God, when we kick him out of the driver’s seat, when we decide that our plan is better than his, it isn’t God that suffers, it’s us. And it won’t take long before all our plans begin to unravel due to our own bad decisions.

I know too many people that believe that God owes them a better life, one free of pain and guilt. And they get mad at God when he doesn’t meet their needs as they see them. And I want to tell you, that’s okay. We can get mad at God when we look at our lives and the world around us and believe that God is letting us down based on our own limited vision and distress. God has big shoulders. God is lovingly patient with us. God does not stop loving us when we get mad at him just because we can’t see beyond our current situation. He wasn’t mad at the Israelites. He was tremendously disappointed at their short-sightedness and ungrateful attitudes. Trusting that God knows what is best for us is hard. We believe that we have a better perspective because we are living in the moment. But God’s got this. He remains in control even if we are too blind to see it.

**“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,”
declares the LORD.” Isaiah 55:8**

How easy it is for us to forget these words as we decide that the grass looks a lot greener on the other side of the fence. The fence is there for a reason. It is for our protection. It is to keep us safe from our own selfish and often foolish decisions. Who are we to demand anything from our Creator? Who are we to go around God to get what

we want when he says “NO, that isn’t good for you”? We try to justify our choices with words like “God just doesn’t understand how much I want this,” or “God is dragging his feet here,” or “if God won’t let me have it, I will just have to get it myself.”

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, nor is your timing my timing, nor are your wants my wants, your plans are not my plans.”

This is all true. But it doesn’t have to stay true. The more we align ourselves with God’s plans we find that our desires begin to reflect God’s intentions and will in our lives. This leads us to be grateful for the provisions that he has provided rather than reaching for things that he never intended for us. Reaching for things that God doesn’t want for us will leave us empty. Not only that, finding that since we remain unsatisfied, we continue to reach for even farther, struggling to fill up that emptiness. A bigger house. A more expensive car. A fancier boat. Nothing ever seems to fill that void. That is because the void that we seek to fill wasn’t created by God, but by ourselves, by our own sense of longing and dissatisfaction. We find ourselves looking for things to fill the bottomless pits of our own ego.

But God has already prepared a space in our souls that he wants to fill with the things we need. When we seek the things God wants for us, we will find that the holes in our souls are filled with the good things that nourish us. We become satisfied and grateful. We no longer feel that emptiness. We no longer crave the things that will never satisfy.

How is it the old hymn by B. B. McKinney goes?

I am satisfied.

I am satisfied.

I am satisfied with Jesus

But the question comes to me

As I think of Calvary,

Is my Master satisfied with me?

Rev. McKinney is telling us that satisfaction comes with having a personal relationship with Christ. But even when we do have that relationship, are we still struggling to make sense of the world? “Is my Master satisfied with me?” Are we aligning ourselves with God’s purpose? Are we striving to bring our orbit closer to the Son of God so that we can know his perfect will for our lives?

We were never meant to live separate lives. Christianity is not an aspect of who we are. It IS who we are. Christianity doesn’t give us purpose. Our relationship with Christ gives us purpose. Saying a prayer and getting baptized doesn’t change our lives. Having a relationship with our Creator changes our lives.

“Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown.” **Luke 8:8**

That is supposed to be who we are. That is what we are meant for. Not wishing we had meat instead of manna. Not wishing that our physical lives are better than our neighbors.

What is even more interesting, according to Jesus, is that he is constantly filling us to overflowing so that we can meet the needs of others. We can be perfectly happy with the size of our cups, realizing that the overflow will fill the lives of the people around us. If our cups are based on human wants, then they will never be filled, and we will watch as the people that we are supposed to be taking care of, walk away empty. We

become unfulfilled gluttons taking not only what we need, but also that which was meant for others.

4 The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, “If only we had meat to eat!

5 We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic.

6 But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!”

Do we look back at our old lives wishing for what we had or are we embracing our new lives where we are filled with the spirit and satisfied with what God has given us, the nourishment we need to serve him?

This week, I want us to seriously look at our blessings and be truly grateful that God satisfies our every need. Having done so, let us also examine how we can share the bounty of his mercy and grace with our neighbors. In a world that is in a constant battle with forces that seek only to destroy the values that Christ teaches, we can rest assured that God remains in control and will continue to meet our needs. Are we satisfied? Can we give up our attitudes of Never Enough and allow God to meet our needs instead of our wants? Let us be thankful, without reluctance, that God remains our savior and our provider.

God bless you all!

AMEN

Copyright © 2023 Rev. Walt Wellborn

Scripture references provided under copyright by:

**THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION©, NIV© Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984,
2011 by Biblica, Inc. © Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.**