

**Kimberly O'Brien, Sermon 7/24/2022 Ex 16:11-30 (focus), Lk 11:1-13**

Who do you trust?

Who do you allow yourself to completely relax and be yourself with?

Who do you share your deepest secrets, insecurities, questions and joy with?

Who do you know you can count on, no matter what?

Today we hear about trusting God through prayer, food and sabbath

In the story from Exodus, the Israelites have been freed from the oppressive powers of the Egyptian empire, released from Pharaoh's exhausting dictates to do more

They're wandering through the wilderness toward the promised land

And they begin to complain

It's been about six weeks since they fled Egypt and their memory seems to betray them

/ / /

Just before this passage they complain "If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you [God] have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." (Ex 16:3)

It has been observed that the Israelites were taken out of the Egyptian empire at the Red Sea, but it took all of the wandering in the wilderness for the empire to be taken out of the Israelites

They long for what they perceive now as the good 'ol days

The LORD hears their complaint, and responds with a promise and a test

The LORD promises enough to eat, and rest on the Sabbath

We see the Israelites struggle with the idea of enough

We see the Israelites resist rest

We are so much like the Israelites / / /

When the promised bread shows up in the morning

They ask, "What is it?"

Manna – literally means "What is it?" / /

We live also within a society where our food is often unrecognizable

With processed and packaged foods like hot dogs and Doritos

Our summer BBQs take on a manufactured flare

Even turkey at the deli and chicken at the meat counter are often unrecognizable from  
their animal source

What is it?

We, like the Israelites, struggle with knowing, and understanding

We, like the Israelites have issues with our food

The industrial revolution and our insatiable consumption have changed us...

so the question... "What is it?"

Has been silenced within the roar of our collective appetite for more

We don't ask "What is it?"

But continue to consume more than our portion

We don't ask "What is it?"

As the gears of the American food economy continue to churn

We don't ask "What is it?"

Because the empire is within us, and we are the empire / /

We are so much like the Israelites, not only about our food

But also through how we know God

The Israelites knew God, perhaps intellectually...

as the one who brought them out of Egypt

They knew God in their mind, but perhaps struggled to trust God in their hearts

They worried: what if there wasn't enough bread tomorrow

They collected more bread than they needed, failing one of God's tests

This denial of the limit of **enough** caused the bread to spoil and become foul

It stank/ / it was odious / reeking throughout camp

Many of our farming practices have also become odious ... and reeking

Our denial of the limit of enough has placed such a demand on animal production, that

Factory farms now keep animals in conditions unrecognizable to their habitats

Forcing them to grow and gain weight at unprecedented speeds

Kept in crowded spaces that reek

We are like the Israelites

They knew God, but didn't quite know God's promises

God promises enough

God promises rest

Sabbath is not merely a demand / /

But a promise of care /

A promise of freedom... because

"Whatever you can't rest from you're a slave to" (Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley)

Created in the image of God, humankind needs rest

God took a sabbath on the seventh day of creation

How do we think that we are beyond needing rest?

We justify our busy selves and persuade ourselves out of “a day of solemn rest, a holy sabbath to the LORD” (Ex 16:23)

We think this puts us ahead

But it really makes us exhausted / / and enslaved / /

A recent study found that over 77% of working adults are currently experiencing burnout at their jobs

God promises us, and has built into creation,  
time to rest... sit... dwell... stay where we are...

To STOP! / / recognize our freedom

And observe the holiness of God / /

We are so much like the Israelites

They knew God, but persisted in controlling things beyond their control

Doubting God’s promises,  
and resisting God’s commandments

They thought they knew better

They thought they could ensure a more secure future for themselves

They doubted that God would continue to hear their cries and respond

They were tempted by the idea of more and better

All of this resistance and doubt creates questions about God

Who is God to them?

Maybe by controlling the bread and building their sense of security

They began to create an illusion of themselves as gods

Sabbath and limitations, or commandments, serve to reinforce that

We are not God!

“The LORD said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and instructions? See! The LORD has given you the sabbath” (Ex 16:28-29)

We are so much like the Israelites

How long will we reject accepting what is enough

How long will we collect and consume more than what is needed

How long will our practices continue to foul creation

How long will we push ourselves through times of rest

How long will our behaviors cause us to become exhausted and burnt out

/ / /

In the Gospel, Jesus comes to us reinforcing this message

Teaching us to pray “Give us each day our daily bread.” (Lk 11:3)

Encouraging us to “Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you.” (Lk 11:9)

A challenge we face, though, like the Israelites

Living within a society that proclaims control and responsibility for all aspects of our life

Who is God to us? / / /

Can we impose limits upon ourselves

Can we accept our need to rest

Can we stop the gears of consumption and quest for more

... And let God be God...

Our lives depend on it

Creation depends on it

Wendell Barry, writer, farmer and environmental activist observes:

The industrial era at climax...has imposed on us all its ideals of ceaseless pandemonium. The industrial economy, by definition, must never rest...There is no such thing as enough. Our bellies and our wallets must become oceanic, and still they will not be full. Six workdays in a week are not enough. We need a seventh. We need an eighth...Everybody is weary, and there is no rest...Or there is none unless we adopt the paradoxical and radical expedient of just stopping.

As Christians, we have inherited the paradoxical antidote to this depressing reality which we currently face

God hears our cries

The solution lies within the promises that God rains down upon every one of us

We are not gods, but God is God

We can stop, / we can use restraint, /we can rest

We can trust... not in the empire, but in God

See! The LORD has given you the Sabbath

Amen.