

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

August 1, 2021

Old Testament Reading; Exodus 16: 2-4, 9-15

Responsive Reading; Psalm 78:23-29

Epistle Reading; Ephesians 4: 1-16

Gospel Reading; John 6: 24-35

Sermon Title:

## **MIND YOUR MANNAS**

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: Manna from heaven is the bread of life, not just a frivolous treat. With Manna comes life, and with life comes responsibility.

July 8<sup>th</sup>, 1962 I was riding my motorcycle north on Rt 19A nearing Letchworth Park when a car stopped suddenly in front of me. I rear-ended that car and landed in the ditch with bones sticking out of my left leg in 4 places. I had spent all summer training on the farm so that I might be a star lineman on the football team that fall but that now was all gone. I loudly proclaimed, “oh poop”, well not quite that but another 4-letter word describing the same thing. The traffic was heavy on that

4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend and everybody stopped for the accident. I saw them looking at me expecting a tirade of expletives. I suddenly realized that I did not want to be that person. I quickly apologized for my language and to my surprise several people instantly excused it as totally reasonable.

I did not want to be a crybaby and I even wanted to stand out in an extreme situation. At 16 years of age I already felt that it was my responsibility to set a good example.

This was not the attitude of the Israelites in the wilderness, and the crowd that followed Christ in our gospel lesson were even worse.

In the wilderness the people had a legitimate problem but they were not shy in casting blame. In the gospel lesson they were even worse. They did not have a problem they just wanted free food. Jesus had just fed the five thousand with the five loaves and two fishes the day before. The crowd chased Jesus down and Jesus saw right through them. "I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled." Jesus tried to solicit some responsibility from them when He said, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." Jesus might have well been trying to talk a cat into leaving catnip alone. The crowd tried to shame Christ into giving them more by saying of Moses, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat."

The Manna that God gave through Moses was to feed the mortal body while the people lived, but the bread that Jesus offered was to assure eternal life. A wild beast can live on kills but that beast does not make the kingdom of God a reality here on Earth. What God offers through His Son is everlasting and not just temporal. The scavenger might clean up some disgusting garbage but it does not offer any lasting improvement in its environment. Christ is asking us to be something better than a Buzzard.

When the Jews following Moses were given bread and Quails to live on, they should have been so grateful that they would look for ways to thank God through some service. They did not. When water got short, they referred to the Manna as “this worthless bread.” When the crowd that followed Jesus was offered the Bread of Life in the body of Jesus, they should have been ready to go out and proclaim Christ on the mountain top but they were still not ready to take any responsibility.

In Paul’s long-winded Epistle, Paul says that God gives to each gifts that would make them able to fulfill the will of God. To some “to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ till we all come to the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure and stature of the

fullness of Christ.” This list should offer each one of us something that we can do for God, even if it is just apologizing for cursing. We can, and should all do something to the glory of God and of His Son and our savior Jesus Christ.

We are about to partake in communion. As we ingest the body and blood of Christ let us mind our Mannas and let His spirit pulse through our veins so all that see us will be observing God in us.

The blood of Christ. The body of Christ. Let it make us more like Christ.

Hallelujah and Amen!