

# Exodus 16:1-30 - Satisfied Beneficiaries

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Preacher: Ron

[ 0 : 00 ] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Amen. Thank you all. Don't get too concerned. I'm not preaching. Ron is pretty under the weather with a cold this weekend, but I am thankful for many things, including that he is still going to preach, but so that you can hear him for as long as possible.

I'm going to read a rather lengthy passage, the one that he's preaching this morning for him before he comes to preach. So we're in Exodus chapter 16, the beginning of Exodus 16.

The people of God, having come out of Egypt, are now headed towards the promised land. This is in the middle of their journey, Exodus 16 at verse 1.

They set out from Elam, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elam and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt.

[ 1 : 14 ] And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the people of Israel said to them, Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full!

For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger! Then the Lord said to Moses, Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them whether they will walk in my law or not.

On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily. So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, At evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because He has heard your grumbling against the Lord.

For what are we that you grumble against us? And Moses said, When the Lord gives you in the evening meat to eat, and in the morning bread to the full, because the Lord has heard your grumbling that you grumble against Him, what are we?

Your grumbling is not against us, but against the Lord. Then Moses said to Aaron, Say to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, Come near before the Lord, for He has heard your grumbling.

[ 2 : 35 ] And as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked toward the wilderness. And behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.

And the Lord said to Moses, I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.

In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground.

When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, What is it? For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat.

This is what the Lord has commanded. Gather of it each one of you as much as He can eat. You shall each take an omer, according to the number of the Persians that each of you has in His tent. And the people of Israel did so.

[ 3 : 37 ] They gathered some more, some less. But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat.

And Moses said to them, Let no one leave any of it over till the morning. But they did not listen to Moses. Some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank.

And Moses was angry with them. Morning by morning they gathered it, each as much as he could eat. But when the sun grew hot, it melted. On the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers each.

And when all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, he said to them, This is what the Lord has commanded. Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. Bake what you will bake, and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over lay aside to be kept till the morning.

So they laid it aside till the morning, as Moses commanded them. And it did not stink, and there were no worms in it. Moses said, Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the Lord.

[ 4 : 39 ] Today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none. On the seventh day, some of the people went out to gather, but they found none.

And the Lord said to Moses, How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws? See, the Lord has given you the Sabbath. Therefore, on the sixth day, He gives you bread for two days.

Remain each of you in His place. Let no one go out of His place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day. This is God's Word.

Amen. I will say that my voice, the condition of it, has nothing to do with yesterday.

Because pretty much for the whole day yesterday, I was not yelling. I was weeping. But, maybe I've just come to manhood finally, in my later years.

[ 5 : 47 ] You know, we've just celebrated, probably most of us have overdosed, on turkey, on dressing, mashed potatoes, football, and I must say, probably very happily so.

And, you know, we've been celebrating Thanksgiving over this week, and honestly, I think it's probably one of my favorite holidays. Because it doesn't generate the controversy.

I mean, everybody's good for giving thanks. And to give thanks is a great thing. I mean, yes, we celebrate it because back in the early 1600s, the pilgrims came, and the reason they did it was because they had been used to setting apart days of, for thanksgiving, you know, all through their history.

And so, you know, now it's our federal holiday, as was instituted by Abraham Lincoln back in 1863. And so, I really appreciate that our country would set aside a day to acknowledge the great gifts we have been given.

gifts that come to us from some other place. You know, being thankful is one of those virtues that we try to instill in our children.

[ 7 : 22 ] You know, from day one, maybe you would think I was cruel that I wouldn't give up their cup of milk until they said thank you. But when we come to the scriptures, when we think about thanksgiving, thanksgiving runs from the beginning all the way through to the end.

And what we see in the scriptures when it talks about thanksgiving is something different from what we celebrate.

We, we probably, and many of you may have as custom for thanksgiving, you sat around the table and started to think about all those things you're thankful for. And we have plenty.

We live in great abundance. And so there's so much for us to be thankful for. But when we look at thanksgiving in the scriptures, that's not exactly what they're talking about.

In Romans 1, and I mentioned this in an article from the branches this last month, there's an interesting passage that Paul quotes when he starts talking about the fallen nature of man and the rebellion of man against God and talking about them exchanging the glory of God for images of creation and images of themselves.

[ 9 : 03 ] In one of the places there, he says, and they did not honor him as God or give thanks. Now, why did he throw that in there?

Apparently, to the apostle Paul, there was something about giving thanks that was foundational to faith, that is foundational to how we relate to God.

And when we fail to give thanks, we are, we're probably committing much, much, much greater sin than we think.

So, what I want us to do is to, this passage in Exodus is a great story. And so, I pull it up because one of the best ways we can see how we are called to give thanks is to look and see how people did it badly.

grumbling, and that here, in this story, what we have is a great example of grumbling, which we could say is really the opposite of thanksgiving.

[10:30] You know, in this story, Israel has just within the month, they have left Egypt, witnessed, they have witnessed all of the plagues, they have witnessed the destruction of the strongest army of that time in the world in the middle of the sea.

They witnessed the water's part in them being able to walk across a dry ground. they witnessed all of this just in the last couple weeks.

This is not way back in their history. This is just yesterday. And so now they're heading from Egypt to the mountain where they're going to meet God, their covenant God, the God of their father, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

But now as they go out, they're running into some discomfort. I mean, they're out in the wilderness, and the wilderness is not a fun place to be.

They've already struggled with water just in the last chapter. They finally got to a place where there was water, but it was bitter, and they couldn't drink it. And so miraculously, God supplies a purifier for this water right before their eyes.

[12:14] And so they've just witnessed that as well as all of the rest. So now they come a little bit farther, and the issue is food.

in the text says there in verse two, that the whole congregation grumbled at Moses, which really kind of represents a ramping up of their discomfort, because in the last chapter, it just talked about the people were complaining and grumbling, but now it's not just some, it's the whole lot of them. Everybody is grumbling and complaining. And you've got to feel for these folks. I mean, they're in a barren wasteland. Their supplies are running out.

You know, what are they supposed to do? And so this is, their grumbling is over a very serious situation.

But then there's, in verse four, there's a word that might even appear to be, at least to me, it appears a bit disturbing.

[13:41] Because in verse four, we see what God says. He promises to Moses, he's about to provide for the people, but then he makes a statement, it says, that I might test them to see whether they will walk in my law or not.

So what is this test? What is he doing? It's not a test. I mean, the test results are not for God. He knows what he's going to get.

But this is a test he's putting them under very intentionally so that they might know, know themselves.

So there are two things that occur here that also occur for us in life that will unveil probably more quickly than anything else the true nature of our hearts.

us. And the first one is hardship. And the second is restraint. And Israel got both.

[15:00] Out here in the middle of the wilderness, the first part of this test that God is putting them under is hardship. You know, and as soon as they leave, they are redeemed from Egypt, they're redeemed from their slavery, they get through the Red Sea, and now things begin to head south.

Or if you're from Alabama, you say things begin to head north. And so how did it go for them? How did they respond?

Well, not, not too good. They complain. They come to Moses, they complain, but the worst part of it is that they accuse God of malevolence.

They accuse God of being evil. They're basically saying, why didn't you just kill us in Egypt?

It would have been so much simpler. if you're going to bring us out here in the middle of the wilderness to let us die of thirst, why did you go through all that trouble?

[16:23] Why did you just kill us back there? And then look at their memory. It's becoming very selective. They say, we remember when we used to sit by the meat pots and ate bread to the full.

You were slaves? You forgetting that? You cried out for 400 years to be set free, and that's what you're reminiscing about?

and it's bringing back all these warm fuzzy memories? So on one hand, you know, they've got this selective memory.

The other, they just want to die. Of course, they really don't want to die, and they really don't want to go back to Egypt. Maybe they're just being a bit dramatic.

But they are living in many ways the same way we do with the philosophy, what have you done for me lately?

[ 17 : 44 ] Didn't matter about yesterday in the water deal. Didn't matter about last week in the Red Sea. Didn't matter about the weeks before, how we came out of Egypt with all this new loot, gold, silver.

We plundered the people. We didn't even raise a sword. Didn't matter. What have you done for me lately? What about right now? I'm uncomfortable right now.

So where are you? That's the first test. Their hardship, their discomfort. The second one comes in the form of restrictions.

Moses tells them when he comes, he tells them, look, this is how the Lord's going to provide for you. He's making this promise and God is going to take care of all of their sustenance needs.

But what he does is that he puts a couple restrictions on it, especially around the Sabbath. And so what they're told is that in the evenings you're going to get quail, but in the morning there's going to be this stuff, which if you remember as Will was reading the text, it's called manna, which basically means what is it?

[ 19 : 13 ] They didn't know what it was, they didn't know what to call it, and they said, well, let's go have big breakfast of what is it? and they were to collect only one day's worth for six days.

Now, you have to understand that these kind of restrictions, this kind of restriction for this people was strange, because these were agricultural people.

And when you're an agricultural person, you live by the rule that you store, you store up, because harvest only comes a couple weeks out of the year.

And so everything you grow, you store it away, you pack it away, and so that's what they would normally think. But that's not the way God wanted to relate to them.

He wanted to relate to them as their covenant God, upon whom they would depend daily for all their needs.

[ 20 : 26 ] And so he tells them for six days, just gather up, you get an omer, basically a jar, gather up what you need for that day.

And for all the people, everybody had enough. Everybody had plenty. plenty. But then when it came to the Sabbath, that one night, they were to store.

And again, this is going to be a hard thing for agricultural people. Now you've got a day where they're basically told you can't work, you can't do anything, you're just going to sit and rest, you're not even going to go gather breakfast.

rest. You're going to store it up. And so you see the challenges. They're thinking that these commands are maybe unreasonable at best, but these are the restrictions that God gives.

And why does he do this? Again, it's the second part of the test. test. Because in this test, he is going to unveil to them a heart that is self-determining, self-sufficient, self-focused.

[ 21 : 58 ] Because all you have to do to unveil a self-determining heart is to put up one sign. that says no. This is what Paul talked about in Romans 7.

This is how the law comes. And the law doesn't create sin in us. It inflames it. It's like gasoline. And all you need is just one command.

It says, don't touch. Don't eat. Don't do that. Why is it? Well, anyway, here, I think this is, we need to take a look at how we communicate, even how we teach God's law.

Because typically, the way we teach our kids, or the way we'll teach here in church or with others, is you keep the law because you're really going to prosper if you do.

It'll go well for you if you do. It's a good thing. There are benefits benefits for it. If you don't keep the law, things are just going to go north.

[ 23 : 09 ] It's just, it's the way things work. So God gives his law to direct us towards things that will help us to prosper in this life. So, you know, if we, you know, obey the food restrictions, then we'll probably be healthier and we'll live longer.

If we obey the sexual ethics of Scripture, then we're going to have healthier, happier marriages.

We're just going to have a much more fulfilling life. And so if we do all this, it's just going to be better for us. Keeping the law of God is reasonable. But the problem is, sometimes it isn't.

what happens when you run into those people that are not abiding by that sexual ethic and they seem to be doing fine.

What, you know, why? In the Garden of Eden, what was it about that one tree that Adam and Eve couldn't eat from? It had nothing to do with health. It had nothing to do with anything like that.

[ 24 : 36 ] It was just to see. That one tree, it had grapefruit, but it was one tree that would demonstrate whether they would be willing to trust.

And they weren't. And so the reason that God gives us his commands, yes, there's a lot of benefits to them. Absolutely, if we live according to the kingdom ethics we have in scripture, life will be better.

there. But that's not the only reason he gives it. He gives us restrictions on all the things that are in his law to see if we'll trust him.

But those restrictions will raise up our self-determination faster than anything.

What was unveiled to the Israelites in this period, there were three things. Three aspects of their idolatry. The first one was, is their self-determination to have life on their own terms.

[ 26 : 04 ] They wanted to live, they wanted to eat. They had a need for food. It was a good desire. They needed food. So food was not the problem. It was, the manna was not the problem.

The quail were not the problem. The problem was that they wanted to eat on their own terms. Not on God's terms.

They wanted to eat when they wanted to, how they wanted to. They wanted to be able to store it the way they wanted to or not. They wanted life on their own terms.

Second thing it revealed was that they thought they knew what was better for them. I mean, after all, it was their life.

Starving in the wilderness was not their idea of a good journey. And it definitely didn't have all these new rules about how much they could gather for breakfast.

[ 27 : 16 ] The third thing it revealed was simply that the Lord's provision in their minds was insufficient. it was not enough.

It wasn't enough. It wasn't good. They got sick of eating that manna every day. They wanted to be the judge of what was good or bad.

The Lord was not filling the bill. And so they wanted more. So we see this heart of self-determination also connected to this heart of greed.

And this is the outworking of a grumbling, ungrateful, unthankful heart.

You know, I'm getting a hard spot. I'm wanting, whether it's for food or water or sexual affection or social respect or career advancements.

[ 28 : 34 ] You know, these are the things I think I need and they may be all good things. But when I'm the one that's determining and when I'm the one that's defining what is good, then all of those good things become very, very corrupting for me.

So, are we thankful or are we grumblers? others? How do you see all this working out in your life? Well, let me ask you a couple questions.

What's in your life right now for which you are not very thankful? I got a feeling that most of us probably can think of something.

What is that thing in our life that we wish was not there? That if it was not there, life would be good? Maybe it's my singleness.

Maybe it's my spouse. Maybe it's some physical ailment. Maybe it's a job. Maybe it's we can go on and on and on.

[ 29 : 59 ] What makes you anxious? What makes you angry? what is that one thing, again, that's keeping you from having a good life?

Paul Tripp basically defines grumbling as simply the background drone of a discontented heart. And this is what we had in Israel.

And unfortunately, it's far, far too common in us. things. So what does a thankful heart look like?

Well, I think if we go back and look at Israel and all this grumbling that they're doing, I think we'll see thanks, a grateful, thankful heart is really just the opposite of what they were doing.

It was not a heart that's self-determining, but it's a heart that is humble in three ways. A thankful heart is first, a heart that believes that the Lord is good.

[ 31 : 19 ] God is good. It's that simple. It's amazing that in this text, when God is coming, when the people are coming and grumbling, they're complaining, they're wishing they were back in Egypt,

they were wishing that God had killed them back in Egypt, they're wishing all these things.

God is already in the process of providing for them. He is coming to promise all this good that He is going to send to them, which they are not going to work for one iota.

He had, He didn't have to, and they obviously didn't deserve it, but He did.

But this is the nature of this covenant relationship that He's brought them into. This is the kind of God He wants to be for them. He wants to be the God that provides.

He wants to be the one who gives to them day in and day out. And so this God that they are now engaged with is a whole new being who's good.

[ 32 : 50 ] second thing is that life on His terms is good.

Because one of the things they forgot conveniently to build their case, they forgot where they were going. God took them out of Egypt and He was taking them, yes, to the mountain where He would establish His covenant with them.

But then they were going to pack up and go to the land flowing with milk and honey. God was taking them to the promised land.

the land that He had promised Abraham and Isaac and Jacob over 400 years before. And He was fulfilling His promise.

And yes, that road had to go through the wilderness. But it was a good way to go. Thirdly, His provision was not in scarcity but in lavish abundance.

[ 34 : 17 ] Did you notice as we read through the text where God says that He's not just going to bring manna. He says, I'm going to rain bread from heaven.

Of course, our idea of rain is that, well, we're going to starve. but He's going to rain, pour out, not in scarcity, not just barely enough.

He's pouring it out. I'm not just going to give you bread, I'm going to rain bread. bread. It would be bread they didn't work for, but bread that simply rained down on them from above because God was good and His ways are good.

See, here's the crux. Really, you could almost say this is the crux of the whole of the Christian life. it really is, you know, whether we're struggling in places of hardship, like I would bet most of you in some ways are.

Because when I get into hardship, when I get into these tough places, all I want is to get out. I want relief.

[ 35 : 54 ] And I complain, and I go to God in prayer, and I say, why, or you see it through the Psalms, how long is this going to last? Or, if you've done it long enough and you haven't gotten the answers you want, you just quit going.

Because He doesn't care. are. So if we're facing hardship, or if we're facing these unreasonable, undue restrictions on life, Him telling me how I am supposed to live and conduct my relationships in ways that seem to be very unreasonable, the answer is the same.

Is God good? See, all of our sin, I think, all of it is rooted right there.

it's the exact same temptation, it's the lie that the enemy brought to Adam and Eve in the garden, the very first one, and it's the one He's still bringing.

It's the one that's the most effective. Is God good? Is He good for putting you where you are?

[ 37 : 40 ] Is He good for keeping you from doing things you want to do? Is He good? A thankful heart stands in the goodness of a God who is for His covenant children good in everything.

A thankful heart stands on the goodness of God and trusts His wisdom on how He is doing things. A thankful heart sees ourself as not the benefactor, not the determining force, not the master.

A thankful heart God sees our self as the beneficiaries. I am the humble servant holding my hands open to the one who has promised His goodness for me.

And a thankful heart stands there and doesn't budge because it knows this covenant God is good.

And the way He wants to relate to us is that we would turn to Him in daily dependence.

[ 39 : 32 ] on His goodness and rest in that goodness. Well just to finish up here God gave Israelites manna in the wilderness but it wasn't enough because they still died.

The aid of that manna there is a better manna. There is the satisfaction of a much better bread from heaven.

The Israelites you know they had all the evidence that they needed to trust the one who saved them from the land of Egypt. But what about us? We've never seen those miracles.

We've never seen the waters part. We've never seen the plagues. But we've seen something more.

Because those Israelites as they came out of Egypt they did so by hiding under the blood soaked doorposts of a lamb that was sacrificed in their place.

[ 41 : 04 ] And little did they know that that lamb was going to be their covenant God himself.

love. And that lamb says to them in John 6 I am the bread of life.

Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat of it and not die.

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever. The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.

What Jesus says here is you're going to want you're going to need and you think all these other things in life and the temptation is going to be to grumble and to complain and to feel very anxious and afraid and insecure if you don't get them.

[ 42 : 21 ] But what he's saying here is there's a whole different bread and it's a bread that satisfies it's a bread that will feed your soul and it's not a bread that you work for.

It's a bread that is poured out for you from heaven in lavish abundance. And Jesus said come to me.

You're in the wilderness. You're struggling. Come to me. All who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.

I love the verse from Romans 8 32. And we'll close with this. He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all.

How will he not now with him freely give us all things? is he good or what?

[ 43 : 40 ] This is our redeemer the one who has given all that he could to make you his covenant child and now he calls you to himself that he might lavish upon you all of his goodness.

So is God good? Will you trust him? Let's pray.

Father we are just like Israel fools we are fools to think that we know better than you.

We are fools to think that you're not good. Forgive us for listening to the lies of the enemy.

Forgive us for buying into those lies. forgive our self determination. Forgive us.

[ 45 : 08 ] Help us to remember not the meat pots in Egypt. Help us to remember the crucified son, the living bread.

Help us to remember how you have demonstrated to the nth degree your goodness and how could you give us more? And now with him you promised to give us not just some things but all things and to give it freely.

Oh father give us a spirit of humility and dependence that expresses itself in great thanksgiving and joy.

so that the world would hear about your great goodness. We pray in Jesus name. For more information visit us online at [southwood.org](https://southwood.org)