

## Joshua 5:9-12

<sup>9</sup>The Lord said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt.” And so that place is called Gilgal to this day.

<sup>10</sup>While the Israelites were camped in Gilgal they kept the passover in the evening on the fourteenth day of the month in the plains of Jericho. <sup>11</sup>On the day after the passover, on that very day, they ate the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. <sup>12</sup>The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

### I.

I love this scripture and I find us in it. The story of Israel is a story of dependence on God. But look with me into this scripture text and see if you can see how life can create obstacles to our ability to see that we are dependent on God.

Remember!.... the story of Israel and if you don't know it, learn it. A couple of weeks ago we read about Abram looking at the stars and God promising to make of Abraham many generations. Those generations came as God promised. Abraham, his son Isaac, his son Jacob, Jacob's 12 sons. Jacob's son Joseph goes to Egypt and is sold into slavery, but becomes powerful. Jacob's 12 sons live in Egypt and raise their children. Then the children produce children who live in Egypt, but then the next generations become slaves, but Moses comes along and God delivers them out of Egypt, parting the waters of the Red Sea. They go into the wilderness and God gives them manna from heaven to eat each day. Look with me at Exodus 12.

For a generation God provides their meals this way. Then that generation dies off. And then Joshua 5, our scripture reading for today happens. The people of Israel, about to take the land that had been promised to them since Abraham looked at the stars, eat the crops of the field. From that day forward, God does not send manna ever again.

### II.

This is no small transition. Manna is life to these people. It is their daily sustenance and daily reminder of God's presence. As they receive the manna, they are confronted with the evidence that God *meets all of our needs, that God is in control of everything.*

When God provides manna, the people are daily confronted with the means with which they left Egypt. In receiving the manna, how could they forget that day in Egypt when God allowed them to flee by killing the first born Egyptians, but passed over the homes of the Israelites. They fled Egypt and were given lives of freedom, because God had provided a way out of their slavery. For the Israelites, manna is a reminder daily that they have life because God has provided.

Now that they are growing their crops and not receiving the daily manna, how will they remember? At one time they went out to gather their bread from heaven, and easily saw that God has provided this. But now they must go out to their crops. Wouldn't they be tempted to say, look at what the work of my hands have provided for me? It is a new challenge and a new struggle.

It is a privilege also. They have presumably a more diverse diet. Anything the ground can provide, they can eat.

But with this privilege comes the obstacle that they are no longer presented with the fact that one who delivered them from Egypt also gives them their daily food. They are in danger of thinking that they are self sufficient.

### III.

And this is the danger that I want us to talk about today. When we don't remember who we are and who God is, we are in danger of thinking that we are self sufficient. Our scripture text names two things that God gave Israel to help them remember that they belonged to God. Circumcision and The Passover

In Circumcision, the males may look and remember that they are marked this way so that they know that they belong to God.

The Passover Meal is a meal of remembrance that has been celebrated by Jewish people since the time of Moses, remembering that God delivered them from

slavery in Egypt. They did not deliver themselves. It was God and God alone who gave them their life.

*Of course it isn't only the Israelites who have difficulty remembering that everything comes from God, is it?*

Probably the most difficult spiritual problem we face is remembering how dependent we are on God, and how privileged we really are.

Human beings have selective memories when it comes to remembering that God has given us everything that we have. We are not infinite creators, but finite dependant creatures who selectively forget our dependence on God.

Let me give as an example of this selective memory, someone who is not us. For example, the British poet W.E. Henley. As a young man he had his leg amputated. When he went on to become a famous critic and writer, he wrote in his famous piece "Invictus", which is latin for unconquered,

It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishment the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate:  
I am the captain of my soul,

As creatures dependant on God, none of us is really the captain of our soul. We can admire people like WE Henley for their determination. Hard work is important to success, but it is only one ingredient. Our success is due to blessings from God and the privilege of the circumstance into which we were born. "Henley's success would have been impossible had he been born without literary talent, with a below average IQ, or with different parents and social connections. There are many things over which we are powerless. Believing that we are really in control is just an illusion.

We are privileged people. I remember when the Oakland Athletics, Ricky Henderson, stole his 900<sup>th</sup> base, he declared he was the greatest baseball player ever. My granddad laughed at the TV and said to me. If you find a turtle on a fence post, it didn't put itself there. When we forget that our blessings come from God, we also lose awareness of just how many blessings we have.

IV.

How do we remember our blessings? We have to remind each other. Just like the Israelites had to keep teaching the coming generations about God's providence, we also need to teach today's generations about God's providence. We do this by sharing the story of our faith, but also by living our faith. We have God to thank for our place and many faithful people to thank for making it possible for us to be where we are.

We have to tell our story, but we also have to live our lives in gratitude. If we point to God as the source of our life and blessing, but do not live that out in gratitude, we aren't really getting the message across.

A couple of you might have had Gertrude Reed as a Sunday school teacher. What did she teach you? Besides thanking her in person, another way to say thank you might be inviting more children to come to this church to be part of our Sunday school.

Some of you might remember your confirmation. You might remember how you were taught the catechism or given you your understanding of the grace of God.

V.

The best way to say thank you is to live a life of generosity in doing things for others. **When God made that covenant with Abraham that promised him many descendants and land, God said God would bless the whole world through these descendants.**

Our church is in a position where God can bless others through us. We are trying to make our church easier for visitors in local hotels to find out about by placing our brochures in lobbies because we want to welcome everyone that we can.

We want to get to know the people of Harrodsburg who may be looking for church homes or are looking for God, so we open up our church like we did at Christmas Open House.

And you can be part of anything that you want to be in a deeper way. We heard a sermon at the presbytery meeting that Henry Grall said and I quote, "That was a really cool dude!" The sermon was called "Come and See" – come and see what the Presbytery's missions are. Well I say to all you come and see what is going on in this church. Let's work together to see what we can do.

If you want to see us do some things, come and talk about it with any of our committees. If you think of ways that we can make our building more inviting, safer, more environmentally friendly, come talk to our property committee.

If you see ways that we can be more inviting to people who aren't members come or if you think that any one that you know of is being neglected by the church, blow the whistle, come talk to our Outreach committee. Help us to grow together.

We are taking our middle school youth on a mission trip to Chattanooga in July.

We need some fund raising ideas. How about teaching our youth how to make some bracelets or other crafts so that we can raise money to do some mission work together?

VI.

It is so easy to forget that God has provided, that we must take a new posture, one of generosity and gratitude.. We are in a position where we grow our crops and it's easy to forget that God is the one who put us in that position. Tell your story, and tell God's story. But most importantly, show your gratitude and help out in any way.