

In our first lesson we find the Israelites in the wilderness,
And they are NOT happy.
They were grumbling and complaining,
“if only we had meat to eat!
We remember the fish we used to eat in Egypt for nothing,
The cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions and garlic”

It wasn't that they didn't have enough food.
It wasn't even that the food they had lacked tastiness,
God was providing them each day with manna,
this heavenly food that was described as sweet and tasty.

They weren't being forced to eat mud.
God was giving them perfectly good and nourishing food.
It's just that there was no variety.
Every day they got up and it was the same old thing.
Manna on Monday. Manna on Tuesday. Manna on Wednesday.
we can sort of imagine how that could have gotten pretty boring.

Can you imagine eating the same thing every day?
The same thing two or three times a day?

The Israelites longed for variety
I wonder if we would be any different?

When we were in Tanzania, we had wonderful food.
Homegrown, pain-stakingly prepared, no preservatives food.
And as we were instructed to do by our synod representative,
We graciously accepted whatever was put on our plate.
Even our vegetarians, made a conscious decision to eat what our hosts gave us,
even the meat.
But one day, Pastor Joyce passed me the plate of oranges,
And she said, “here, you didn't get any of these”
And without thinking I blurted out, “oh no thank you. I don't like oranges.”

Well, you should have seen the look on her face.
The concept of not liking a food was foreign to her.
And as soon as it was out of my mouth,
I realized I had made a mistake.
So I changed my mind, and took an orange.

We are so used to variety.

It has become something that we expect.
Something that we think we are entitled to.

The Israelites wanted variety so much that they would have been willing to go back into slavery to get it.

They were so hungry for meat that they romanticized the past.

Oh ...Remember when we were in Egypt? How wonderful it was? How delicious was the food there!

What were they thinking?

When they were in Egypt they were slaves!

But they momentarily forgot about that part.

Forgot about the forced labor, the lack of freedom.

All they could think about was that God was now holding out on them.

Giving them nothing but manna.

So they grumbled and complained...

Sound familiar?

It's seems to be part of our human nature to want what we don't have.

You've heard it said....the grass is always greener on the other side"

How often do we, like the Israelites, focus more on what we do not have rather than on what we do have.

How often do we focus on what God is not doing for us, rather than on what God has already done for us?

Too often we take for granted what God has given us.

Too often we overlook the abundance that God provides us.

Rather than giving thanks each day for what we have,

We complain about what we don't have.

I even notice it in my own prayers,

when I am not paying attention,

my prayers become focused only what I want either, for myself or others.

I tend to launch right into all my requests.

God, please do this.

God, please help this one.

God, why aren't you doing anything about this?

Too often, we focus on what we don't have rather than on what we have.

But the good news for us is that God's abundance isn't dependent on how faithfully we receive it.

Even when we take God's gifts for granted.

Even when we complain about what we **don't** have

Even when we forget to thank God for what we **do** have.

God continues to give.

In the death and resurrection of Jesus,

God made us a promise.

God promised that no matter what we do or what we fail to do,
it will not separate us from God's love and abundance.

God promised us that we will not be punished for our ingratitude

The rest of this story is interesting....

The Israelites ended up being punished by God for their complaining.

God literally said to them....Oh so you want meat

I'll give you so much meat that it will be coming out of your nostrils.

And those who complained, ended up being punished.

But in the cross, God said, "no more" to punishment.

Instead, Jesus stepped onto the cross and bore the weight of human sin

He took on the punishment that we deserve for falling short.

And in return, we receive everything that Jesus deserves

Including Abundant and eternal life with God.

God promises to give us everything we need.

Not necessarily, everything we want, but everything we need.

Not just food for our bellies, but food for our souls as well.

And so God promises us a daily diet of unfailing love and forgiveness.

Love on Monday. Love on Tuesday. Love on Wednesday.

With God's unfailing love and forgiveness on the daily menu
maybe variety isn't that important after all.