**Privation**

Based on [Exodus 16:2-21](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Ex16.2-21)

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Lenten Midweek 4

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Popular psychology teaches that people naturally look after their physical needs before seeking higher spiritual fulfillment. Food, Clothing and shelter, if you are lacking in these things, the world says, you will devote all your life to securing them. As a professor of mine once said, you don’t contemplate the nature of the universe while your starving.

It makes sense that psychologists and sociologists think that way…that man is just an animal, perhaps a more intelligent animal but really an animal in the end. **And although he boasts of a more sacred dignity, when it comes down to desperate circumstances his physical needs will always take priority.** It’s the nature of the beast called “man”, so concludes modern anthropology.

But the Bible says that man was not made to serve such base desires. Man has physical needs, but he was not created to attend to them without God. God says that he made man in his own image. **Man-as he was created to be-is not merely a talking animal, it would be more accurate to say he is a corporeal spirit.** While he can deny his maker and his higher nature and become a beast, fully grown men and women are created spiritual creatures, though lower than the angels, no less dignified. And physical desires and appetites--while very real--are not what truly make a man. A man is made according to his spirit.

A theme that marks our Lenten Scripture is privation--that is, *the lack of the usual comforts or necessaries of life--food, water, clothing, shelter..*. For today’s reading, the scripture is about hunger, the lack of food.

The Israelites were wandering in the wilderness. God had just delivered them with a mighty hand from the Egyptians, by great signs and wonders. **And he got glory over Pharaoh and showed them all that He their God was the Lord who fights for them.**  He had sent Moses to them to lead them out. And Moses led them out. And soon after they ran out of food and became very hungry. They began to grumble about their hunger, such that they even accused Moses of trying to starve them.

Moses was sent by God to shepherd them, and when they suffer lack of food they turn into little beasts. T**hey disregard their spiritual condition, slander Moses and sin against God on account of their hunger.**  How quickly they turned away from the Lord of signs and wonders to fear and worship a different god…the god of their belly. But God is patient. He bears with their weakness and does not deal harshly with them. They do, after all, have physical needs. And so He gives them meat in the evening and bread in the morning, because he is their God and provides for them in their hunger.

Going without food, hunger and starvation, these are no fun at all. But man does not live by bread alone. There is a more fundamental hunger, a greater need of the soul that, on account of sin, suffers a privation by nature.

When Jesus appeared, he taught his disciples what mankind is truly lacking. **Man is lacking righteousness-the desire and ability to do what is right in the sight of his God. If righteousness were food, mankind would die of starvation. If holiness were water, mankind would be dry bones.** Man grumbles about trivial things, and strives for in earnest for what is perishable, while forgetting the one thing needful.

If the natural man would consider for a moment how starved he is of righteousness, his earthly problems would cause no anxiety. You don’t contemplate carreers, birthdays, and summer vacations when you are starving for redemption. And the less that hunger is satisfied, the more sickly, gaunt and depraved he becomes. He needs food for the soul, and much like one suffering the flu might not feel like eating or drinking, the thought might even make him nautious, nevertheless he needs the nutrition and the hydration to rightly recover.

Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. The promises and commands of God are daily bread for the soul. And so Jesus teaches the crowd at Capernaeum, “**Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.**” And regarding thirst he teaches the woman at the well saying, “**Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”**

Jesus teaches his disciples that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, will be satisfied. And he came to make such satisfaction. He satisfied the demands of the law when he poured out his blood on the cross. He satisfied the wrath of His Father on our behalf, declaring us righteous by forgiving our sins every day through faith, giving us a perfect status and fit bill of health before God. He also satisfies our need to do the will of our Heavenly Father and please him with our new lives. He quenches our thirst for righteousness by giving us a measure of his Spirit, who makes us holy…set apart for God’s work; and gives us miraculous power to keep his commandments, not with grumblings, from the heart.

A good reason for fasting is to remind us that we do indeed have more than we need. Every one of us could do without most of the things we have and labour for. We daily devote our lives to many perishable things, busy with idle tasks that give no reward in heaven. We are tempted to trust in worldly treasures, returning to them like a dog to it’s vomit, and grumbling when they fail us. If every day, we would simply set aside earthly ambitions, and devote ourselves to righteousness. If we would set our mind on things above, to be kind, patiently keep our life and responsibilities in order, and be generous and genuinely concerned for our neighbor in all we do, we would have more than enough to occupy our time and go to bed every night with a clear conscience and a satisfied mind.