

Title: “The God who Provides in Every Season”

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Deut. 26:1–11, Luke 4:1–13

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Service Readings: Deut. 26:1–11; Rom. 10:8b–13; Luke 4:1–13

These passages teach us that God’s provisions are sufficient for us – whether through abundance (the Israelites in the Promised Land) or when lacking (his sustaining power in the wilderness).

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Listen again to the opening verses from our Old Testament reading:

26 “When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance and have taken possession of it and live in it, ²you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from your land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket, and you shall go to the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name to dwell there. ³And you shall go to the priest who is in office at that time and say to him, ‘I declare today to the LORD your God that I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our fathers to give us.’ ⁴Then the priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down before the altar of the LORD your God.

What was the point of these offerings? What was the lesson from God? In many ways it was about the faith of the individual. It was about teaching his people how they were to place their trust in him. This passage spoke about trusting during times of abundance, of offering the first fruits, the best portions of their bounty to the Lord. Their faith would be set against their inclination for greed. Would they resist the temptation to hold on to everything, or would they instead find it in themselves to give back a portion of their treasure? This might have been easier in these times of abundance, but what about in times of famine? During those times when they had very little for themselves, would they resist the temptation to hold on to what little they did have, or could they instead find the faith to let go of a portion, trusting that God would provide – even if what he provided might not be what they expected?

The faith of the individual. That was indeed an important component of this practice commanded by God because it allowed the person an opportunity to identify his or her sin of selfishness and repent of it. And through this act of repentance he would be drawn into a closer, more intimate relationship with his creator.

But there was also the other side, so to speak, of this lesson. For faith in God is valueless if God cannot be trusted to keep his promises. Now the Israelites could look back and find clear evidence that he was a God who could be trusted, for he had promised to form a nation out of Abraham, promised to deliver his people out of slavery, and promised to provide for them while they were in the dessert. And he had done all these things. And so they could look with confidence on the promises yet fulfilled – promises of continued earthly provisions while they traveled, promises of

delivery into a land set aside for them, and promises of other blessings from God. But as wonderful as all these promises were, *even the Israelites* knew that they were just a foreshadow of a larger promise – one that would challenge their faith for thousands of years. For although they could look back and see the faithfulness of God’s promises, they could also see the faithlessness of theirs. They could recount all the times where they had broken their own promises to God, promises of devotion, worship, and trust.

And so as history moved forward, the true promise of God became clear. It was not about these earthly provisions at all but about something much larger, something much more important to the eternal lives of these believers. This was about their salvation. It was about their God coming to save them – once and for all. It was about their God calling and collecting them unto himself.

So when Jesus came, was baptized, and entered into the wilderness, he reenacted this test of faithfulness of these people from long ago. But unlike them, he didn’t succumb to earthly temptations, he didn’t sin. He became what Israel could not be – he became perfect in his obedience, perfect in his trusting faith, perfect in every single way. And he continued as he made his way to the cross where he would trade his perfection for the sins of all people, suffer the judgement that was due them.

It is in Jesus’ sacrificial act that we discover the true meaning of God’s provisions. It has little to do with the things of the world and everything to do with the things of salvation. Our God, is a God that provides for us in every season, in every moment. Sure, he provides the things of this world, but they pale when juxtaposed with the things of the cross. For it is there from the cross that God provides so vividly, so needfully, so selflessly. It is there, from the cross that the blood poured out and the judgement inflicted *fully* and *completely* provides for each one of us.

In the time of the Israelites, God asked for just a portion of the people’s offerings – their first fruits. But on the cross, Jesus gave not just a portion, he gave.... all. Everything he had was placed on the altar of sacrifice, handed over to the father as a sin offering, with the blessings flowing back to you and to me.

What, you might ask, does this look like in our lives? How might we respond to what Christ has done for us, how through his death and resurrection God has provided for us so completely? I am reminded of a story about an elderly woman named Anna. Anna had always been a generous person, but not in the way the world usually defines generosity. She didn’t have great wealth. She didn’t give because she had an abundance—she gave because she knew she already had everything she needed.

Her husband had died years ago, and she lived on a fixed income. She had seen hard times. Yet, she never seemed anxious about the future. When a neighbor lost his job, Anna showed up with a meal. When a young couple at church was struggling to pay for car repairs, she quietly covered part of the cost. She was never reckless, never showy—just open-handed.

One day, a friend asked, “Aren’t you ever afraid of running out?”

Anna chuckled. “Running out of what? My Father owns it all.”

She pointed to her worn Bible, which sat open on the kitchen table. “I already have more than I could ever lose. Christ died and rose for me—what do I lack?” She lived with a quiet peace, not because life had been easy, but because she knew that whatever she had—little or much—was not her security. The cross and empty tomb had already secured her future, and so she lived freely in the present. This is Anna. Secure in the knowledge that God has such great love for her that he provided – not just in worldly things but in the thing that is most important to her – salvation.

I end with this question to you: do you live in the reality that Jesus has provided for you through a cross and an empty tomb?

Please pray with me.

You have given us all that we need—far more than the passing things of this world, You have given us life through the death and resurrection of Your Son. Teach us to live as people whose inheritance is already secure, trusting in Your provision, resting in Your promises, and offering back to You the best of what You have given. Free our hearts from fear and selfishness, that we may live in joyful faith, reflecting the generosity of Christ.

Amen.