

Old Testament Exodus 16:2–15
Psalm Psalm 105:1–6, 37–45
New Testament Philippians 1:21–30
Gospel Matthew 20:1–16¹

“The wilderness wanderings of Israel are a regular New Testament metaphor for the life of the Christian family between Easter and God’s final victory,” says Tom Wright.²

Good things come to us from a struggle and then when they become good or easy, we become bored and like a bunch of children we begin whining – the proverbial backseat ‘are we there yet?’ or ‘he/she started it’ arguments on a long journey.

Many of us have been both the child and the parent who has to put up with it and often it is down to hunger in many instances isn’t it. I don’t know about you, but sometimes we barely got out of the driveway before someone claims, ‘I’m hungry.’

The Israelites were barely into the journey to the promised land when the complaints came, ‘I’m hungry!’ And so like so many parents on a journey, a food stop is in order. This food stop however is food that appears to come from the wilderness – a wasteland with not much in it, yet here it supplies the needs of the entire Israelite nation. A substance that looks like bread in the mornings and meat in the evenings. And even double doses for the Sabbath so they people may keep it holy to the Lord as God commanded them.

¹ *Revised Common Lectionary* (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2009).

² N. T. Wright, *Twelve Months of Sundays: Reflections on Bible Readings, Year A* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2001), 106.

St Paul is in a difficult situation also. Here he is stuck in a jail proclaiming Christ to all who are prepared to hear, and to those who don't. The letter he writes to the Philippians is on that tells of his longing to be with Christ but his calling by Christ to be here is more necessary. And that is a good thing for us.

Occasionally we wish we were somewhere else, yet we know that being right where we are is the right thing. It is the right thing because we are present where we are the most needed. In that like Paul, we can share in the joys and sorrows of one another and look forward to strengthening one another in Christ as we are called to do. We do this because of Jesus who died on the cross for us and forgave us.

We are called to work from the beginning – from our childhood – or when we receive Christ into our hearts and name Jesus as Lord and in our belief in God the Almighty, whenever that may be.

And so Jesus's parable about the landowner who called many throughout the day – a metaphor obviously – paid those who worked longer the same as those who worked for less time.

Just like the labourers who went out to work at the beginning of the day and felt they deserved greater rewards for the longer hours of work they put in, we can sometimes lose sight of who God is and God does not judge or give by our standards. When we think like that, we will be sorely disappointed every time.

God is generous to all those who come to him, no matter if it is at the beginning, middle or end of our life. God calls us and Paul felt that calling when his desire was to be with God, he knew God wanted him with us to help understand what God wants us to be and do. Paul felt the presence of God through Jesus in his struggles and pushed on for the greater goal.

The voices of the Israelites to Moses and Moses to God, remind us of the calls from the backseats of our cars, voices that clammer for attention and call for us to reassure them that all will be well because, well, this journey is boring already, however we are called to remind them to have patience as the end of the journey will be worth it and more.

We must find time to be still and remember the times we have been fed in our wilderness by God through the hands of others, whether we recognise it or not. Remember that God has been as generous to you as God has been to me and to all whom recognise God as the beginning of our saving grace through Jesus life in our world. The parent who called us to calm down and who fed us on the journey so that at journeys end, we can be part of the joy unending that Jesus promises us **if** we believe. With it comes hardships but standing together in the face of hardship, we can overcome and know the grace of God upon us and, who knows, we may even win over someone to love and serve the Lord our God.

May you recognise God in your journey, hear yourself as you call to God for help, ask for grace and mercy so you may proclaim the gospel to all the world, allow others to help strengthen you and be blessed in the giving or receiving of God's grace. Amen.