

What does security mean to you?

When I was in high school, it meant someone to sit with at lunch.

In college, it meant having enough underwear to not have to go to the Laundromat every 7 days, and a good GPA.

What does it mean to you? To have a little money in the bank? To own your own home? To have a retirement account in place?

In the story Terri has read for us, the people of God are decidedly INsecure- things look scary and intimidating, and they are full of fear and of dismay, they are saying, “if only” and wishing things were different.

Perhaps, in this week of the Wilderness that is Wall Street, you can identify with that. In times like these, we all do well to examine what we depend on, **what makes us feel secure, where we place our trust.**

The people of God, traveling in the wilderness, were invited to let God’s promise be their security.

I am going to rain bread from heaven for you

And each day

[you] shall go out and gather enough for that day.

Give us THIS DAY our daily bread, we pray. This day. Enough for today.

And God is faithful to sustain us for the journey.

God is faithful, God keeps that promise- and we call it Providence- the notion that God will provide what is needed to sustain us, day after day after day.

The people of God are instructed to go out and gather **enough for that day.**

And- you may remember this from the story- if they gathered *more* than a day’s worth, it would rot- grow wormy and ugly and inedible.

You can’t store manna- it has no shelf life.

They were invited to let God’s promise be their security- to depend on God in a daily way. To trust.

And the same invitation, of course, applies to us. In whatever landscape we navigate, we are invited to trust that God will provide the sustenance we need, **day by day.**

Richard of Chichester wrote a famous prayer: O God, we pray that we might see thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, follow thee more nearly- **day by day**. That is the way we are invited to do it, the way we are hard-wired to do it.

One day at a time is the way that we are asked to follow.

Do not be anxious about tomorrow, Jesus said, tomorrow can be anxious for itself. Let the day's own troubles be sufficient for the day.

We are invited to walk this pilgrimage one day at a time, to be present to the **present moment**, to receive the gift offered by God in the moment where you are now, the circumstances you face now, the manna God offers in *this* landscape, this season.

Dailiness is a rhythm our bodies and our spirits understand and are calibrated to. - This illness I've been living with for a few months sensitizes me to the dailiness of my need, and my human limitations. On days when I can't eat, or can't keep what I eat down, it's amazing how rapidly I become useless or hopeless or both. I am reminded, in a new way **to depend on God daily**.

God promises us grace sufficient for this day.

And there are some things we need in daily doses.

Food for example, and sleep.

But also, I believe, a sense of God's presence, a sense of our purpose.

Forgiveness, and healing, and unconditional love.

There are things we need in daily doses,

This is the root, I think, of the ancient tradition of DAILY prayer, of tending our connection to God daily.

We are not asked to manufacture the bread, but we are asked to gather it.

Daily prayer is how we do the gathering.

You can't store Manna.

This means NO hoarding.

No squirreling away, no stockpiling or clutching.

"Best if used by: Bedtime."

Why is that, I wonder? Why would God arrange it that way? Gathering manna is, I think, a spiritual practice, offered to help us recognize something:

We trust in God, usually, as a last resort.

We would much prefer to put together a package of calculated risks and reassurances, and trust that structure (or trust ourselves...)

Sometimes this is about prudence, practicality- good motives.

Other times it is simply about greed- and leads to all kinds of disaster as we have seen this week.

But the thing is-it's all approximate. The things we construct are all as fragile and flimsy as the world in which we dwell.

No matter how 'blue chip' they are rated to be- things crumble and fail and let us down...

We trust in God, usually, as a last resort. Yet we need, daily, things only God can give us.

Several churches in this city are having conversations about what to do if they cannot afford to maintain the large buildings and grounds they have inherited with their current small membership. Their beautiful buildings and strong heritage do not give them 'security' - their security is being found as they trust in God day by day.

My dear friend retired a few years ago, with extensive plans to travel, to rest, to enjoy his spouse and their time together. And shortly thereafter, she died of cancer. He entered his own wilderness. He said to me more than once: **"If only I had died first"**(though he added, he would never wish that loneliness on her). His carefully constructed plans did not give him security. His security is being found as he seeks God's manna day by day to sustain him.

What does security look like, anyway?

I think we are invited to let God's promise be our security, since nothing else is sure.

I am going to rain bread from heaven for you

And each day

[you] shall go out and gather enough for that day.

We trust in God, usually, as a last resort. Yet we need, daily, things only God can give us.

The most secure, grounded, peaceful people I have ever known travel light.
They know you can't store Manna.

They know their own poverty, they have actually come to terms with their own lack of power, vulnerability-
And somehow, in that lack of pretense, in the avoidance of hoarding and clutching, and stockpiling-
They become truly free.
And in that freedom, there is a great ability to recognize manna when it's offered, and **to gather it up.**

And this is how we know God: this is how we know that God is real, and active in our own lives- we are fed.

*At twilight you shall eat meat,
And in the morning you shall have your fill of bread;
Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.*

That's how we know.

That's how we know in our own bodies and bones: we place our trust in the promise of God

And even in the wilderness, we are sustained, day by day.

And then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.

That, my friends, is security.

Some have suggested that **bringing on a new associate pastor is a risk-**
That is a BIG change in our budget- how can we be sure that we will be able to provide that salary year after year??

This is a fair critique- we are an aging congregation, and we have no guarantees about THIS year's pledges, let alone the years to come-
But we have felt led by God to do this:

we were unanimous in our Session vote to seek a candidate,
the APNC was unanimous in its selection of Eric,
and this congregation was unanimous in its election of him.

We have felt led to do this, And we believe that next year

And in the years to come

God will rain bread from heaven for us

And each day

[we] will go out and gather enough for that day.

Security is not in our stockpiles, our clutching, our carefully constructed plans. We're invited to let God's promise be our security. Let me close with some words to a hymn from 'the old faith', and see if there is some truth for you here:

God has not promised Skies always blue,
Flower-strewn pathways All our lives thro';
God has not promised Sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow, Peace without pain.

God has not promised We shall not know
Toil and temptation, Trouble and woe;
He has not told us We shall not bear
Many a burden, Many a care.

But God has promised Strength for the day,
Rest for the laborer, Light for the way,
Grace for the trials, Help from above,
Unfailing sympathy, Undying love.

Annie Johnson Flint

God has promised us manna sufficient for the day.

That, my friends, is security.

Amen.