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Living Life Together by Rejoicing in our Shepherd Who Provides

- what's your favorite meal?...if you could eat anything you wanted, what would it be?...
 - now I'm not asking you that because we're thinking about sending you to the electric chair or something, but there is a spiritual point to be made from all of this...trust me...
 - so what's your favorite meal?...
 - when Kris and I first started dating, she introduced me to one of her mom's recipes for beef and noodles...and that has been passed down to our family as well...
 - the Bear and I always like it when Kris makes these thick homemade noodles and then covers them with pieces of roast beef that's been cooked all night in its own juices...
 - then if you put that next to a great salad and a vegetable...it's out of this world...
 - and if it's followed by a piece of my mom's banana cream pie or one of my sister's pieces of fudge cake (I'm trying to get all the ladies in my life into this story for future payback), that even makes it better...
 - but there's also the issue of bread – I love bread – Kris would tell you that I can make a sandwich out of anything, whether it fits in with proper table etiquette or not...and she has several great recipes for homemade bread...I absolutely love it...
- now, what would you say if Kris was making a great meal like that...and as she was putting the finishing touches on it, I came in from church and started munching on a bag of potato chips...spoiling my appetite on something that's just going to make me feel sick and unfulfilled...
 - there would be something bad wrong with that picture, wouldn't you say?...
 - you would say that there was something significantly skewed about the way I was satisfying my appetite...eating potato chips when there's beef and noodles on the table is the action of a man who's...well, you fill in the blank...
- you know, God specifically designed his world, and designed us to be able to eat, and to enjoy it as much as we do (and sometimes too much...)
 - but then he frequently uses that metaphor to teach His people important truth...
 - that's exactly what's going to unfold today...
 - with that in mind, I'd like to ask you to open your Bible to two places this morning...Exodus chapter 16 and John chapter 6...so we're going to be in both the OT and the NT today...what we're going to study is a beautiful picture of Christ and we have NT affirmation of that fact...
 - so this isn't spiritualizing the text or making it say something it doesn't...
 - the NT clearly confirms that what happened to the children of Israel at this point in their history was powerfully pointing to our great Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ...so please turn to page 52 of the front section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...and page 76 of the NT (page numbers reset in that edition of the Bible)...
- our theme this year is **Living Life Together**...
 - we're talking about what it looks like for our church to be a place where it is easy for men and women to feel/be connected...
 - to be the kind of church family where relationships are being built and strengthened...
 - so we've been studying the book of Exodus...because clearly here's a good example of how God draws a group of people together, and develops them into the men and women He wants them to be...not just as individuals...but in their case, as a nation...

- His visible representatives on His earth...
- just so you know, we're starting to land the plane on this study...
 - we have today and then two more Sundays in this book...
 - then beginning on March 13th, we're going to begin an outreach series entitled Friend Request...that will be a topical study on the issue of friendships...
- when we say outreach series, we mean one that is especially designed so that you can invite friend and co-workers...of course we hope you'll do that every Sunday, but a couple of times a year we have special emphases where we design/print invitations and place focused attention on reaching out to the those the Lord has placed around us corporately...
- also, when we say topical – that's doesn't mean we won't be teaching from Scripture of course---it just means that we might be in one place in the Bible for one message and a different place the next week...as opposed to going through an entire book verse by verse...we believe there's a place for both approaches...as long as God's Word is always our foundation and guide...
- now, here's where we are in our study of Exodus...last week was the great deliverance...
 - it was the crossing of the Red Sea...
 - where God purposely led His children to a place where essentially they were surrounded...
 - even the Pharaoh thought the wilderness had hemmed them in...
 - the Egyptian armies were pursuing them right to the very edge of the Red Sea and things looked hopeless...
 - until God parted the Red Sea, allowing the children of Israel to march through on dry ground and then for the Egyptians to be overthrown when the waters returned...
 - the passage ended with Moses leading the people in a great song of deliverance which memorialized forever all that God had done for them...
- and what you would expect to read next was that the children of Israel lived happily ever after...
 - they marched obediently and confidently into the promised land and they never doubted God's ability to provide for them again...
 - well, not exactly...not exactly...let's listen in...

- read Exodus 15:22-16:36, John 6:26-35, 47-54

- we're talking this morning about Living Life Together by Rejoicing in a Shepherd who Provides...
- with the time we have remaining, let's look for **3 principles to help us grow together as we stand in awe of the provision of Christ.**

I. Beware of the Tendency to Grumble.

- one of the lessons that comes screaming out of this text is the way people like you and me are prone to grumble and complain...
- and what's amazing and instructive is that all of this occurred...

A. Even after their great deliverance.

- the music has barely died down, at least the way this story is recorded in God's Word, before you read about all this incessant grumbling...
- and what does that teach us...about us?...
- do we have eyes to see and ears to hear?...

- how about this...the people of God are incredibly fickle...
 - jumping around and praising one minute and grumping the next...
 - which is why it is so important to develop daily habits of thanking and praising God because we recognize how easy it is for our hearts to go astray...
 - and also why we should be especially impressed by men and women who have developed a long-term pattern of faithfulness and thanksgiving to God for is blessings and goodness...
 - there is something about the way people like that have cultivated their hearts that is different the men and women we're reading about in this text for sure...

- that by the way is one of the reasons we ought to value living life together...surrounding ourselves with men and women who celebrate and recall God's blessings in the past...
- when you gather thankful people around you...it affects your soul, doesn't it?...
- and think about the impact that has on worry... **Philippians 4:6-7 - Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**
- a key phrase in that text is "with thanksgiving"...
- when you develop relationships with people who "get thanksgiving"...you're far less likely to be a grumbler...
 - but when you live like an island unto yourself...depending on the strength of your own heart, or worse---surrounding yourself with a few, or a bunch of negative, grumbling gossips...that is recipe for never benefitting from the eternal provision of the bread of life...the one to whom the miracle of manna points...

- now, what else can we learn from the way this story unfolds...
 - B. Our grumbling frequently glorifies the past in ways that are disconnected from reality.**
 - **Exodus 16:3a - The sons of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the LORD'S hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full..."**
 - say what?...here's the way it really was... **Exodus 2:23 - And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of *their* bondage rose up to God.**
 - so which one was it?...and what does that comparison say about the tendencies of the human heart?...
 - and that's not meant to minimize the legitimate pain you may be facing, or the significant season of suffering in which you may presently experiencing...
 - but beware...just because we remember something in a particular way, and use that memory as a basis of judging what is occurring now...that doesn't mean we have our analysis right...not by a long-shot...
 - my grandma used to say – the good ole days, really weren't that good...

 - C. Our grumbling also frequently exaggerates the future.**
 - **Exodus 16:3b - for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."**
 - well...not exactly...but there it is again...making the mistake of believing that my analysis of the situation is absolutely true...there's no other way to think about what I'm experiencing other than what's currently going through my mind...

- and all of that's like eating a big old bag of potato chips when God is preparing a meal that is so much more nutritional, and delicious, and satisfying...remember this too...

D. Grumbling is ultimately directed at God's love for us and His willingness to provide.

- I'm sure you noticed as we were reading how frequently this word was used...
- here's just some of the examples...
- **15:24 – So the people grumbled at Moses...**
- **16:2 – The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled at Moses and Aaron in the wilderness**
- **16:7 - and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, for He hears your grumblings against the LORD; and what are we, that you grumble against us?"**
- **16:9 - Say to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, "Come near before the LORD, for He has heard your grumblings."**
- verse after verse emphasizes this characteristic of the people of God...but verse 8 gets right to the heart of the matter...
- **16:8 - Your grumblings are not against us but against the LORD.**

- please think about that from the perspective of living life together...
- it's not that there won't be legitimate problems that won't have to be solved...
- like in Acts 6, right after the church was founded, they were having trouble keeping up with providing food for the widows...
- so they sat down, figured out a plan, and that's when the office of deacon was instituted in a church...
- I'm not suggesting that we shouldn't sit down and talk about legitimate concerns and find ways to get them solved...in fact, doing so carefully can actually lead us to enjoying our wonderful provisions in Christ together...
- but that's not what's happening in this text...
- and in some churches today – they're just gossip factories...and people surround themselves with men and women whose nose is out of joint about something...rarely a doctrinal issue by the way...generally some kind of preference...
- and the provisions that everyone can enjoy in Christ are nowhere present...
- and if you tend to be a grumbler...in your home, or at your office, or with your family, or at your church...how are those potato chips tasting?...
 - and did you know there were beef and noodles on the table?...
 - and a big piece of warm freshly baked bread...don't you wish you hadn't spoiled your appetite...
- OK, enough about potato chips...because isn't it amazing, that God blesses these men and women with manna...anyway...
- sometimes I wonder if that's not one of the words God uses most frequently...
- I'm doing this for you anyway...in spite of yourself...
 - that's why I'm always amazed when someone says...God's not fair...
 - shhh – He might hear you – the last thing we want is a God who's fair...with other people in our life or with us...we need mercy, and patience, and long-suffering, big time...
- which is exactly what God gave His people...leading us to...

II. Celebrate a Shepherd who Sustains Life.

- the passage tells us that...
- **Exodus 16:13-15 - ...in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the layer of dew evaporated, behold, on the surface of the wilderness there**

was a fine flake-like thing, fine as the frost on the ground. When the sons of Israel saw *it*, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was.

And Moses said to them, “It is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat.

- the name manna comes from their question – the word manna means, what is it?...
- and we don’t know for sure, other than the few details we read in the text...but we know this, God made it...
- and if God made it...it had to be _____ (really good)...
- do you have anyone in your life who is such a good cook that anything she makes is good?...
- her dishes are even described that way – not, chocolate cake...but Aunt so and so’s _____ -- it doesn’t even matter what comes later in the description – if Aunt so and so made it, it will be good...she can make a glass of water taste better...
- God made manna...and the details are very instructive...

A. By sustaining His people daily.

- God commanded them to only gather one day’s worth at a time...why?

1. as a test.

- **Exodus 16:4 - Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction.**
- and you understand that ultimately this isn’t about literal bread...the Lord was trying to teach them lessons about their relationship with Him...
- your spiritual eating habits are a test of what’s really occurring in your heart...

2. as an opportunity to trust.

- unfortunately we know how some of the men and women responded to God’s instruction...they disobeyed...and think about the lunacy of all of this...
- The Lord had just parted the Red Sea...He had just created manna for them...
- but for some, He still could not be trusted as a shepherd who would provide...
- **Exodus 16:19-20 - Moses said to them, “Let no man leave any of it until morning.” But they did not listen to Moses, and some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul; and Moses was angry with them.**

- this event is mentioned in several other places in Scripture, and Deuteronomy emphasizes the fact that the daily aspect of the sustenance was intended as...

3. as an opportunity to be humbled.

- **Deuteronomy 8:3 - He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.**
- now if you know your Bible – you know where that passage comes up again...at the temptation of Christ...and even though He’s terribly famished after being in the wilderness for 40 days, He doesn’t give into Satan’s temptation to turn stones into bread, proving that depending on the Father for daily sustenance was of supreme value and importance to Him...

- now, where does John 6 fit into all of this?...
- we see clearly that the miracle of manna was....

B. By pointing to the Bread of Life.

- now this raises a very important principle of Bible study...

- we don't believe in spiritualizing passages of Scripture...supposedly finding hidden meanings that no one else can see...
- however, sometimes the Bible gives us clear explanation of what God intended to convey by certain events...
- and there is no question that the miracle of the manna was intended by God to point His people in the direction of His Son...
- and we know that because Jesus, the Master teacher, used this very event to help us understand our relationship with Him...
- after the miracle of the feeding of the 5000...the people asked...
- **John 6:28 – “What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?”**
- and how did Christ respond?...
- **John 6:29 - Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”**

1. In whom you must first repent and believe.

- but what the crowd says next is amazing...
- **John 6:30-31 - So they said to Him, “What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform? “Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.’ ”**
- all of that shows us the stubbornness of unbelief...
- and yet Jesus continued to teach...
- **John 6:32-33 - Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. “For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.”**
- the daily manna was just a shadow of what our heavenly Father would eventually do through the death, burial, and resurrection of His precious Son...
- and of all the metaphors the Father could have used to picture how delicious that decision was...He likened His Son to...the Bread of heaven...giving life to the world...
- Can I just pause and ask you – has there been a definite time in your life where you've humbled yourself...and instead of grumbling and complaining about everything that's going wrong in your life...used the pain and difficulty as an opportunity to come to God with an empty plate...
 - and say, Lord...in and of myself...I don't have any righteousness...I don't have any means of paying for my sin or figuring out my life on my own...
 - I'm hungry....could I please have a piece of heavenly bread...
 - and here's some great news...**John 6:37 - All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.**
 - the people say to Christ – Lord, give us this bread (v. 34)...and so Jesus continues to explain that as the Bread of Life, He will...

2. Who provides daily spiritual food.

- **John 6:35 - Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.”**
- just like with manna, the Bread of Life will sustain us every day...but only one day at a time...

- then Christ explains that there is an eternal aspect to this...

3. Who promises eternal life.

- **John 6:47-50 - Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they**

died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.

- it not only sustains us daily, it sustains us for eternity...
- there's another amazing way all of this is connected back to what we're studying in Exodus...
 - what was the name God revealed for Himself at the burning bush when all of this started?...Yahweh – I am that I am...
 - did you notice the construction that Jesus has used several times in this passage?...
 - we saw it in that previous passage, and it is sprinkled throughout this text...
 - I am the Bread of life (egw eimi) – that's one of seven different examples in the gospel of John where Jesus uses that construction...
 - **I am the bread of life (6:35)**
 - **I am the light of the world (8:12)**
 - **I am the door of the sheep (10:7, 9)**
 - **I am the good shepherd (10:11, 14)**
 - **I am the resurrection and the life (11:25)**
 - **I am the way, the truth, and the life (14:6)**
 - **I am the true vine (15:1, 5)**
- each time our Lord used that phrase, it was an undeniable claim to deity...
- every Jewish person familiar with what had happened with Moses and the burning bush understood exactly who Jesus was claiming to be...
- and there is great power in that name...
- do you remember when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus in the garden?...
- He asked them who they were seeking...they said, Jesus the Nazarene...what did Jesus say...
- **John 18:5 - He said to them, "I am"**
 - (the translators inserted the word "He" – which is legitimate, but it's not in the original – also an interesting tidbit...And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them.)
 - what happened next?...
- John 18:6 So when He said to them, "I am *He*," they drew back and fell to the ground.
- that's power – I am – boom...
- then the men made one of the most foolish decisions they made all night...they got up...the fact that they just involuntarily fell to the ground when Jesus uttered those words should have motivated them to stay on their knees and worship...
- but of course that wouldn't have fulfilled God's plan...because Jesus wasn't only the Bread of Life, he was also the Lamb of God...which is why all of this is promised...

4. on the basis of His finished work on the cross.

- **John 6:53-54 - So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.**

- now let's start putting all of this together...the miracle of the manna was amazing in and of itself...but the fact that Jesus used this very example to point to Himself as the bread of life ties the Scripture together in ways that...

D. This should cause all of us to examine our diet.

1. Have you trusted Jesus Christ as your bread of Life?

- wouldn't it be terrible if someone was here who is trusting the stale potato chips of self-righteousness when a meal of the bread of life was available on the table ready to be eaten?

2. Are you finding your joy and satisfaction in Him?

- **Augustine – You made us for yourself and our hearts find no rest until they find their rest in you (Confessions, 1.1).**
 - do you know why some people are head over heels in debt?
 - it's because they haven't learned to find satisfaction and contentment in Christ...and that big-screen TV won't even satisfy long enough for you to wipe the charge off your credit card...
 - do you know why some people have to win the argument?...because they have no satisfaction in the Bread of Life...so every day is another helping of potato chips...
 - do you know why some men and women are knee deep in activities they know displease God?...because they've never learned to value and enjoy and cherish a growing walk with the Bread of Life...

3. Are you trusting Him for your daily provision?

- it's not enough to say – well, I used to...or I once did...
- while your positional walk with Christ is eternally secure if you've trusted Him as Savior and Lord, your daily fellowship has a shelf life...
- that's one of the lessons that comes screaming out of the manna experience...God is honored when we trust Him daily...
 - do you know why some people are so worried about the future...will I pass the next round of tests, will I graduate, will I get a job, will I get married...it's because they need to learn what it means to enjoy the bread of life daily...and trust the bread of Life to supply what we need, when we need it, as we joyfully and confidently walk with Him...
- and then when we're tempted...it doesn't have the power...because we're full...
- it's like setting up a hot dog outside mountain jacks...no thanks, I'm full...
 - tempted to worry about tomorrow – no thanks, I'm full...
 - tempted to get involved in a gossip session...no thanks, I'm full...
 - tempted to being angry about not getting your way...

- and where does living Life together fit into this – surround yourself with men and women who are learning what it means to gain their sustenance from a growing relationship with the Bread of Life...and you'll have a group of joyful, contented friends who can help you head the right direction...

- now, to complete this story, we have to say something about the seventh day...

III. Worship a Shepherd Who Offers You Rest

A. Don't forget the way Pharaoh shepherded you.

Exodus 5:4 - But the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why do you draw the people away from their work? Get *back* to your labors!"

B. Stand in awe of the beauty of the Sabbath.

Exodus 16:23-24 - then he said to them, "This is what the LORD meant: Tomorrow is a sabbath observance, a holy sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake

and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning.” So they put it aside until morning, as Moses had ordered, and it did not become foul nor was there any worm in it.

C. Learn to find rest in our Savior.

Matthew 11:28-30 - Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.