

September 30, 2018 Fed Up: It's On You

First Reading ~ *Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-29*

The rabble among them had a strong craving; and the Israelites also wept again, and said, "If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we used to eat in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at."

Moses heard the people of every family weeping and wailing at the entrance to their tents. Then God became very angry, and Moses was displeased. So Moses said to God, "Why have you treated your servant so badly? Why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people on me? Did I conceive all this people? Did I give birth to them, that you should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a sucking child,' to the land that you promised on oath to their ancestors? Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they come weeping to me and say, 'Give us meat to eat!' I am not able to carry all this people alone, for they are too heavy for me. If this is the way you are going to treat me, put me to death at once — if I have found favor in your sight — and do not let me see my misery." So God said to Moses, "Gather for me seventy of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tent of meeting, and have them take their place there with you.

So Moses went out and told the people the words of God; and he gathered seventy elders of the people, and placed them all around the tent. Then God came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders; and when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do so again. Two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the Spirit rested on them; they were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. And a young person ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." And Joshua son of Nun, the assistant of Moses, one of his chosen ones, said, "My lord Moses, stop them!" But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all God's people were prophets, and that God would put the Spirit on them!"

Second Reading ~ *adapted from Macrina Wiederkehr in
"A Tree Full of Angels: Seeing The Holy in the Ordinary"*

Why do people become irate when the social justice gospel is preached from the altar? Why do we blame God for the suffering in the world? Why do we think that at the first sound of our cry for help, God should take away the addictions that we've spent years developing? Why does Sunday worship become a burden for some people rather than a celebration? In some way the answer to all

these questions is that we've gotten used to the cheap grace of being uninvolved. We've gotten used to worshiping with hearts that aren't converted. Worship coming from an unconverted heart can only be empty ritual. If we are into empty ritual it is no wonder that we find Worship a bothersome burden to our Sunday morning.

The Israelite community was no different from our own. They, too, got used to the cheap grace of YHWH throwing out manna to them. Like us, they forgot their part of the bargain. The covenant was two-sided: "I will be your God and you will be my people." So often we remember only one side of that covenant. "I will be your God" stays fresh in our memory. "You shall be my people" is too costly for us to take seriously, so we keep it at a distance.

Yes, all too often we are content with the cheap grace of a soft, sweet religion that makes us feel good on the inside but bears no resemblance to the costly grace of sacrifice. Being God's people is costly. It costs us a little extra time on Sunday morning to join with our faith community in worship, to be present for others, many of whom may be in need of community and nourishment, and to let others be a blessing to us rather than a burden. It takes extra time to serve the community. It costs us time to get involved.

This is the system we've grown up in. We are not sufficiently aware of our connectedness to and our responsibility for one another. We do not fully appreciate the great honor it is to be brothers and sisters and siblings in the family of God. Each time we choose cheap grace over costly grace, we leave each other still further in the dust. Yet in God's great compassion, our splendor is rescued from the dust that settles on it. Through the dust we see the face of the risen Christ and our own face of glory. We are frail and glorious creatures. Our glory wins out. We become like God. The invitation of worship is to be like God, which means being like Jesus.

Two frail moments in the life of Jesus richly bless us: the crib and the cross. There was nothing obviously glorious about these two moments. His birth was in poverty. His death was also in poverty, outside the walls of the city of Jerusalem, an outcast. These two frail moments became glorious. Our own frail moments can become glorious too.