

## COMMENTS/QUESTIONS ON THE LESSONS FOR AUGUST 1, 2021

### Exodus 16:2-4, 9-15

- Often we miss the point of this story of the manna in the same way that we miss the point of the feeding of the 5000. We miss the point when we focus on the physical nature of the miracle instead of the meaning of the miracle. God says here in this passage that the provision of manna so that “you shall know that I am the Lord your God.” Deuteronomy 8:3 emphasizes this further: “He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.” God provides the manna as a living reminder that the people are to rely solely upon God for their needs – here even to the point of not being concerned for daily food! How do we live by such faith today when we become focused on our own personal security?

### Psalm 78:23–29

- Note that we only get a small part of the psalm here. Psalm 78 is an extended psalm to encourage the Israelites to be faithful to God by appealing to the lack of faithfulness of their ancestors: “that they should not be like their ancestors, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.” (78:8) The recounting of the manna and quails in our passage is God’s response to the faithless people, who cried out, “Can God spread a table in the wilderness? Even though he struck the rock so that water gushed out and torrents overflowed, can he also give bread, or provide meat for his people?” (78:19-20) And as the psalm continues after our section about the manna and quails, we hear of God’s anger against the people: “But before they had satisfied their craving, while the food was still in their mouths, the anger of God rose against them and he killed the strongest of them, and laid low the flower of Israel.” (78:30-31)
- When do we focus on what we do not have instead of the blessings that God has given us? How can we encourage one another to an attitude of abundance instead of an attitude of scarcity?

### Ephesians 4:1-16

- In the second half of Ephesians, Paul moves from the question of why the church exists to the question of how the church acts. He begins this discussion by emphasizing the unity of the church, a unity he illustrated earlier in the letter by Jesus breaking down the hostility between Jews and Gentiles, making them one. In our present divided world – in a county with over 120 churches – how do we make “every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”?
- Every person is gifted. Every person is necessary. Paul does not rank the gifts that are given to each person. He only emphasizes their purpose: “building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith.” How can we encourage one another to use our gifts and talents?
- What does it mean to “speak the truth in love”?

### John 6:24-35

- This week is the second of five weeks that the Gospel reading is taken from John 6, which unpacks the meaning of the feeding of the 5000. Last week, we heard the miracle itself. This week is a transition that sets the stage for what this miracle means. In today’s gospel reading, the people track down Jesus, and Jesus tells them that they need to move beyond the physical nature of what happened. They are called to the spiritual meaning. How do we move people from physical needs to spiritual needs? What is the difference between the two?