

# FAITH @ HOME

Week of September 20, 2020

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

## ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

**READ:** Exodus 16:2-15

**REFLECT:** Imagine what it was like for the Israelites to wander in the desert. They didn't know where they were going. It was probably hot, and all of that walking would make them tired! They didn't know where they would find food or water. How do you think that made them feel? How would you feel? I think it would be hard for me to see the goodness in anything while wandering in the desert.

Even when they didn't realize it, God was taking care of the Israelites. God helped them escape from Egypt. Even though it took a really long time, God led them to the Promised Land. When they needed food, God provided manna. God gave them with good things that helped them live and remember that God loved and cared for them.

Even when we don't realize it, God takes care of us, too. God gives us good things: people, places, animals, and other things. God gives us good things to remind us that we are loved and cared for by God, too.

**RESPOND:** Make painted toast as a snack. Color some milk with food coloring and use it to paint words or pictures that remind you of some of the good things that God has given you on a piece of bread. After painting, toast the bread in a toaster. Before eating your bread, thank God for providing the Israelites with manna, and for providing you with good things, too!

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: VICTORIA HOPPES



Victoria Hoppes is the Director of Youth and Children's Ministries at Resurrection Lutheran Church (ELCA) in Indianapolis, Indiana. She also serves as the Project Coordinator for Faith @ Home. She has ministry experience with youth, family, and camping programs at both the parish and diocesan levels. She holds degrees from Texas Lutheran University and Luther Seminary. She also holds a certificate in Youth and Family Ministry from Forma's certificate program. You can follow Victoria on her website, [www.ministryincontext.com](http://www.ministryincontext.com), or on social media (@vlhoppes).

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## ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

**READ:** Exodus 16:2-15

**REFLECT:** In this week's story from the Old Testament, we encounter the Israelites wandering in the desert. It is important to remember that just two chapters ago, they were suffering in bondage under Pharaoh when Moses came to the rescue. But now we find them wondering and whining. Hot and hungry. Things are so bad, that they seem to have forgotten how bad it was under Pharaoh. Now all they can think about is there hunger...you might even say that they are hangry! (Hungry + Angry) What is amazing is that even in this state, God hears them. Not only does God hear them, but God answers their grumbling. God hears them and provides. This is a common theme in all of Scripture. God provides. For the Israelites, God provides manna and quail for them to eat.

This story reminds us that God is listening. God is aware of our needs. Whether this be the needs we name in our prayers or the needs we grumble under our breath. God hears us. And God provides. And for that, I give thanks.

**RESPOND:** Gratitude is a part of our relationship with God. Remembering how God has provided for us in strengthens our relationship with God. This week we will practice this by keeping a gratitude journal. As you end your night in prayer, spend some time writing down on paper, or naming out loud the things you are grateful for.

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: MALCOLM MCLAURIN



Malcolm is a seminarian out of the Diocese of Olympia and is currently a senior The University of the South: School of Theology in Sewanee, TN. His background is in children's, youth, and young adult ministry. His 20+ years of experience has taken him from Mississippi and Arkansas to California and Washington. He is a husband and father of two wonderful boys.

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## ADULT AND YOUTH

**READ:** Matthew 20:1-16

**REFLECT:** *"That's not fair!"* That was the response when I was talking to some middle schoolers about this passage. How dare the landowner not pay everyone the same! How dare the landowner pay everyone equally!

The landowner represents God. Have you ever thought that about God - God is not fair?

That's when we learn about God's goodness, when people get more than they expect. We learn in this passage about God's overwhelming love for all people, the people who work long hours and the people who don't work as much. God's goodness is unfair.

I remember waking up one morning and my room was mysteriously clean. In the middle of the night, my mom picked it up. Of course, it never happened again, no matter how many nights I went to sleep hoping she came in to clean. The gesture, the unexpected event of my room being clean when it was my responsibility to clean it, makes me think of God's goodness.

God's love is an unexpected surprise of God's goodness.

**RESPOND:** Sometimes by doing something God would do, we see God differently. Agree as a family to each do something unexpectedly good for another person who isn't someone who is in your normal circle. For example, make cookies and send with a message, send a thoughtful card, or mow their lawn. Ask each other: what is unexpected? Was what we did good? How did it make you feel?

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: HOLLY ZAHER



The Rev. Holly Rankin Zaher serves as Rector for St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Evansville, IN. For 30 years, Holly has helped people think and reflect on what it means to be church in today's culture in the Episcopal Church as a lay youth ministry professional and as a priest. If Holly isn't hanging out with her husband or three kiddos, she's probably somewhere reading, hiking, or making things out of yarn.

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## ADULT AND ADULT

**READ:** Exodus 16:2-15

**REFLECT:** For the most part, when life hands me a bowl full of lemons, I'm one of those people who responds by making gallons of lemonade. After all, joy isn't that hard to discover when yours is a glass half-full type of personality and the inward depths of your personhood continuously point to finding beauty in the most unexpected of places. But then, life happens. Tragedy strikes. And as is the case of my current predicament at the time of writing this reflection, a "shelter in place" lockdown has been imposed upon my city and her neighboring counties, affecting nearly seven million San Francisco Bay Area residents. To say that I'm having a hard time focusing on God's goodness would be an understatement. Yet as I sit with Moses' words in the book of Exodus, I can't help but see how the simplest and most bountiful goodness showed up for the Israelites, each and every day. The manna that rained from heaven was exactly enough, for that day and for the people of God. The whole thing makes me wonder: How is today's goodness exactly enough for you and me to taste and be filled by too?

**RESPOND:** Sometimes I liken focusing on God's goodness to exercising an old muscle: if and when we get out of practice, we have to start stretching and training so we can get back in the game. Before you go to bed tonight, consider putting into practice the ancient Ignatian exercise of Consolation and Desolation. Pay particular attention to those moments when you sensed God's presence (which is consolation) – when you were, quite frankly, overwhelmed by goodness, even if you didn't realize it in the moment. This exercise "shows us where God is active in our lives and where God is leading us," among other benefits, and at least for our purposes, can help guide and usher us back into more clearly seeing the goodness of God from the get-go. For more information on the practice, go to <http://bit.ly/igspirituality>.

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: CARA MEREDITH



Cara Meredith is a writer and speaker from Seattle, Washington. Her memoir, *The Color of Life: A White Woman's Journey Toward Love and Justice*, released in 2019 (Zondervan). You can connect with her on her website (<https://www.carameredith.com/>) and on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (@carameredithwrites).

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