

KAILUA CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Sunday Worship, August 4, 2024
Rev. Irene Willis Hassan
“The Faith-Based Budget”
Scripture: Exodus 16: 4-7, 13-30, 35

Exodus 16:4-7, 13-30, 35

4 Then the LORD said to Moses, “I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. 5 On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days.” 6 So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “In the evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, 7 and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your complaining against the LORD. For what are we, that you complain against us?”

13 In the evening quails came up and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. 14 When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. 15 When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?”^[a] For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat. 16 This is what the LORD has commanded: Gather as much of it as each of you needs, an omer per person according to the number of persons, all providing for those in their own tents.” 17 The Israelites did so, some gathering more, some less. 18 But when they measured it with an omer, those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage; they gathered as much as each of them needed. 19 And Moses said to them, “Let no one leave any of it over until morning.” 20 But they did not listen to Moses; some left part of it until morning, and it became wormy and rotten. And Moses was angry with them. 21 Morning by morning they gathered it, as much as each needed, but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

22 On the sixth day they gathered twice as much food, two omers apiece. When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, 23 he said to them, “This is what the LORD has commanded: Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD; bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning.” 24 So they put it aside until morning, just as Moses commanded them, and it did not rot, and there were no maggots in it. 25 Moses said, “Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. 26 Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none.”

27 On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, and they found none. 28 The LORD said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and instructions? 29 See! The LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he gives you food for two days; each of you stay where you are; do not leave your place on the seventh day.” 30 So the people rested on the seventh day.

35 The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a habitable land; they ate manna, until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.

Sermon: The Faith-Based Budget

Kailua Christian Church has long operated on what we call a “Faith-Based Budget”. This means we don’t review our budget fearfully; we believe that God will provide the funding if we’re doing His work. I was talking to Pastor David Turner a couple weeks ago, and he recalled a time in the 90s when KCC went to approve a budget for the future year that exceeded the income of the previous year, with no logical explanation on why KCC felt it could afford a greater expenditure than its proven provision. The next year came and went, and while Pastor David found himself surprised that this strategy had worked and indeed, the congregation met and exceeded its budgetary goals, KCC knew this “faith-based budget” would work.

In this chapter from Exodus, God asked the Israelites to operate on a “faith-based budget”, too. He delivered them manna from heaven, which is a sticky sap that is still commonly eaten in the region – we often stick pistachios in it and eat it as a treat with our evening coffees in Jordan. Manna is sort of the Middle Eastern snack equivalent to mochi, so I brought a plate of mochi for us to share today as a visual representation of that moment shared together by the Israelites so many years ago.

God got upset with the Israelites when they attempted to hoard their manna so it would last longer. Like our church in its precarious financial situation, the Israelites were lost and starving in a desert. It seems natural that they would want to store some of their treasured food as a protection measure against future periods of starvation. Yet, God rebukes them for this very human response of anticipating scarcity. God was in the middle of building an important home in the Israelite people, and He got frustrated that all they could see was what might be missing in the future instead of what He was providing them right then and there. God expected the Israelites to view their manna on a “Faith-Based Budget” and use it responsibly as they found it rather than store it away out of fear.

KCC has faithfully used its manna all these years to sustain us through each day that God commands us to gather as a church, following God’s command so many years ago to responsibly use what He’s provided you rather than fearfully hoarding it. This fact

about KCC is actually one of the major things that attracted me to you all; I saw your curious budget choices and thought to myself, “they’re trying to live the Gospel instead of maintaining a dying social club – that is really commendable!” It’s clear that your primary objective isn’t to act out of fear of scarcity.

Instead, your primary objective is to create and sustain disciples of Jesus, which has been occurring, as God has rewarded you by providing a summer of fruitfulness. New visitors to the church have increased 1500% since May (that is, an average of 25 visitors per week instead of 2 per month), and consistent retention of new visitors turning into regular visitors has increased the consistent worship size by 14%. You’ve managed to transform at least 3 lives in the course of these past months, in the interns you are holding in your care, who will share their testimonies of experience with you over the next three Sundays. I know statistics in a sermon isn’t very inspirational, but I’m a statistics-minded person and to me, it’s very inspirational to see the numerical measurement of growth that you’ve accomplished together in such a short time. You all eating your manna at God’s ordained pace instead of hoarding it has indeed paid off. Your refusal to let fear guide you is a clear representation of your dedication to the mission of Christ, who very often told us to have faith and not fear.

Yet, as we come to the end of our summer agenda, it feels like God is asking us to store the 7th day of manna to prepare for the sabbath. Pā’ina Night comes to a pause on August 22, and our internship program comes to a pause on August 25. You may feel like the Israelites and want to keep harvesting the manna into the 7th day, but that is not what we are doing here together come the end of August, if we want to continue to remain true to God’s command in Exodus about responsibly using resources.

Now, why wouldn’t God want us to keep the momentum going right now? The reason God prohibited the Israelites from harvesting the 7th day is because of their motives. The Israelites were worried that someday God was going to stop producing the manna for them to eat, so in their anxiety, they tried picking as much as they could and storing it up for that “rainy day” that the manna stops coming. Yet, scripture tells us that the Israelites ate manna for 40 years in this same format – 6 days of harvest, and resting from harvesting on the 7th day. The manna kept coming, even when they took a day off from harvesting it. God commands that we rest from harvesting on the sabbath day not only for us to “recharge”, but also to demonstrate our trust in Him that He is still working even when we are not.

When the interns leave in the next few weeks and the Thursday night services pause, this won’t mean that we’re “giving up.” Instead, we’re leaning into what this church has always faithfully done, and that is to believe that God is still working even when our human resources like manpower and money are placed on hold. I ask you to imagine

the future of this church in the same way that our founding generations of Kailua Christian Church did – that we have put our resources into the church, and we now trust that God will do the same during our period of rest.

As the church's programs move into a period of pause, I ask you all to do the same in your own lives. Yes, reflection and "recharge" are good spiritual tools to possess and are products of taking time to rest, but during this resting period, I ask you to consider what Moses told the Israelites so many years ago: "In the morning, you shall see the glory of the Lord." Use this period not only to recharge, but to also focus on trust in Him.

I ask you to consider focusing a sabbath period in your life as an act of trust because I think many of us feel that the weight of the world is on our shoulders. If we don't take care of our ailing loved one, who will? If we don't fix the bathroom plumbing, who will? If we don't take care of our grandkids, who will? If we don't keep the momentum going at the church, who will?

Yes, you have a responsibility in all these things – family, life maintenance, your job, the church. And you're expected to harvest these responsibilities 6 days a week. But on the 7th day, you're expected to rest. You're expected to rest not only to recharge, but more importantly, to know that it is indeed God who is watching over your family. God who is watching over your home. God who is watching over this church. If we don't take a period to honor and recognize Him instead of believing that the whole thing is entirely on us, we've lost sight of why we're doing any of our responsibilities in the first place.

God has a plan for your family, your home, your job, our church. He built you; He knows every hair on your head and every desire in your soul. He surrounds you with His love and grace. He calls you by name and you are His. He wants you to rest to recharge. And He also wants you to rest so that you can let Him show you His glory.

This is a faithful church that uses their manna to elevate God's glory rather than hoarding it and letting it rot. The manna you've used here this summer has manifested in changed lives, increased worship attendance, and ignition of the Holy Spirit in this place. We're entering the 7th day now in which it's time to rest and let that Holy Spirit take over. When we come back together on the 8th day, let us not only be recharged, but be witnesses of His cloud of glory that works even when we're not working. Let us rest in trust for Him.

Amen.