

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

www.stmagnus.org

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

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Welcome to St Magnus Cathedral this morning. It was founded in 1137 by St Rognvald, in honour of Magnus, his uncle. The Cathedral belongs to the people of Orkney and its doors are open to all. If you are a visitor, we hope this order of service will help you feel part of our worship together.

SUNDAY 4th October Harvest

You can find our Sunday worship here.

<https://www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation/>

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/YQH0MrRXHUs>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Opening meditation

Enough—simply enough, not too much, not an overabundance, but—enough.
Sufficient for the day, not for storing up or hoarding for the lean times, but—enough.
Seems fair that everyone should get just what they need regardless of status, just—
enough.

Those are the resources supplied by God.

Reading **Exodus 16:2-15** read by **Rosie Wallace**

The people began to complain against Moses and Aaron there in the wilderness. 3
The people of Israel said to them, "If only we had died by God's hand in the land of
Egypt, when we sat next to pots of meat and ate our bread till we were filled! But
now you have brought the whole community out into this wilderness to die

of hunger!" Moses said to Aaron, "Tell the whole Israelite community, 'Present yourselves before God, who has heard your complaints.'" As Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of God appearing in the form of a cloud. Then God spoke to Moses and said, "I have heard the complaining of the people of Israel. Say this to them: 'In the evening you will eat meat, and in the morning you will have your fill of bread. Then you will know that I am your God.'" So it came about that in the evening quail flew in and all around the camp. And in the morning there was a layer of dew all around the camp; when the layer of dew evaporated, there on the surface of the desert were flakes of something: delicate, powdery, fine as frost. When they saw this, the people of Israel said to each other, "What is it?"—not knowing what it was. But Moses told them, "This is the bread God has given you to eat. "This is the command God gave you," he continued. "Each one is to gather just enough to eat. Let everyone collect a two-quart measure of it for each person in your tent." The Israelites did as they were told. Some took a large amount. Some took very little. But when they measured it by the two-quart measure, those who took a large amount did not have too much, and those who gathered very little did not have too little. Each had just as much as they needed. Moses told them, "No one is to keep it overnight." Some of the Israelites did not listen and kept it overnight. It turned rotten and full of maggots, and Moses was angry with them.

**May we be struck by the wisdom of these words
and marked by hearing them.
For within story lies meaning, and
within meaning, the wisdom for which we seek.**

Reflection

What do we really need to live on? The NHS currently states that women need 2,000 and men 2,500 calories of energy intake per day from their food.

What do we actually consume? In the UK the average consumption per person is almost 3,500 calories. Grossly excessive to what we actually need. Now, compare that to a country like Eritrea where the average consumption is a little over 1,500 calories per day. That puts our consumption into perspective.

All very interesting, but what has this to do with this week's Bible story? After the traumatic release from slavery in Egypt, and the escape from Pharaoh whose army was destroyed in the process of trying to reclaim the Hebrew people as slaves, we now meet the community of Israelites on the move in the wilderness scrubland of around Sinai. There are a lot of them and water and food are scarce. This is a time to get acquainted with sustainable living, to be satisfied with what you need, not what you want.

And, as you might expect, the community is not happy. There are three stories in this part of Exodus relating to the physical needs of the community and their appeal to Moses and Aaron. Two short stories about the provision of water frame the larger story of the provision of manna and quail in the desert that is our focus. All three stories depict an appropriate provision for all the people.

And there is a patient response from the leadership because the community is in uproar with its grumbling and moaning against Moses and Aaron for having dragged them away from the riches of Egypt to the poverty of the wilderness. We read that Moses and Aaron are at pains to remind the people that when they moan about them, they are actually moaning about what God has done for them.

It's all rather typical isn't it? Parents will know well the situation of taking the children out for the day spending a fortune to get into some fun place, having prepared a picnic for the journey, having taken a day off to dedicate to family time. You think you have had a great day out with memories that will last for ever, only to hear in the car on the way home, "I'm bored! There's nothing to do!"

Yet, despite the moaning of the people, they are provided for. In this instance with manna in the wilderness. What was manna? Some suggest manna may have something to do with the honey-tasting resin dropped from the tamarisk trees well-known in the region. Others suggest it might be honeydew produced by insects, a delicacy in the Middle East even today, and rich in energy. We will never know.

What we do know is that it was a sign for the people that they will be provided for, but not to excess. They are being taught to think only about their needs, not to hoard what they can pick from the ground, but rather to ensure day-by-day that each and every person has enough food for that day.

The ethics of food production today are fraught. It only takes a cursory investigation into industrial food production to be shocked at the seeming unsustainability of what we are doing. Many documentaries over the years, expose what we are too often unaware of in the food chain, as well as the basic fact that for decades now there is enough food produced in the world to feed every person comfortably yet millions are beset with starvation.

It's when the gluttony of the developed nations is compared with the impoverishment of many other nations the justification becomes ever harder to sustain. And that is an inequality gap that is getting wider and wider. When is enough enough?

Prayer

When our eyes are bigger
than our stomachs...
When we imagine 'having' more means 'being' more...

When our security revolves around having more than others...
When power is about stuff
and the more there is the more power we have... May we be forgiven

May we find bigness is.. having just what we need
and leaving enough for others to have full lives.

May we find grace is... letting others take first
before we take what we imagine makes us comfortable.

May we find minimum isn't frugal, but generous enough to live fully.

May we recognise in keeping
the kingdom to ourselves,
there is nothing to grow in the world.

Blessing

As barns are replenished, as feed stores are refilled, as food shelves are restocked, so
in this time of harvest, may our souls be restored, reinvigorated, renewed.

May we never have the wool pulled over our eyes. May we instead get angry about
those things that keep people poor, and choose to live here in the way we want the
world to be.

May we insist the world is for everyone to share and that land is not just a
commodity. May we live justly with the earth and respect it's needs and its gifts.

May we work together so that those who have no food will join us at the banqueting
table.

May you stay safe in the Way of Christ, and may you be blessed by his Spirit this day
and always.