The LORD Heals and The LORD Provides

(*Jehovah-rapha* & *Jehovah-jireh*)

Exodus 15:22-16:36

Key Verse: 16:4 “Then the LORD said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.”

 Last week we studied about Moses’ Song. Moses sang about how God had delivered the Israelites out of Egypt. He also sang how God would lead them into the Promised Land, the holy mountain on where the temple would be built. Through Moses’ Song we learned that the LORD is God the Almighty. He was a warrior who fought for his people. Through Moses’ Song we also learned that God is pleased with those who praise him and thank him. I encouraged all of us to sing songs, hymns, and psalms at home, at school, and wherever we are. Even though the environment is not allowed for our singing, we can make music to the LORD in our hearts. If we can’t sing songs in loud, we can turn on radio for 99.1 JOY FM to listen to gospel songs or use YouTube for worship hymns. Then the spiritual atmosphere in our house will be different. We can experience God’s presence and the power of his love in our daily life.

 Today’s passage tells us how the LORD helped the Israelites when they were troubled in the desert. Here we learn two names of God in these two chapters: *Jehovah-rapha* (the LORD heals) and *Jehovah-jireh* (the LORD provides).

First, *Jehovah-rapha* (the LORD heals)(15:22-27): It had been three days for Moses and the Israelites who came out of Egypt and arrived in the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. (23) When they came to Marah, which means “bitter”, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What are we to drink?” (24) We understand their desperate situation without finding water for three days in the desert. They needed water to feed their children, people, and animals. How did Moses deal with it? Look at verse 25. “***Then Moses cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became fit to drink***.” When Moses threw a piece of wood provided by God into the water, the bitter water was changed into the drinking water. A miracle happened when Moses obeyed God’s word. This piece of wood reminds us of Moses’ staff which divided the Red Sea when Moses raised it and stretched out his hand over the sea.(Ex 14:16) Here, what really does matter was not what kind of wood or staff Moses used, but how he used it. Moses raised his staff by faith, then the water was divided. Moses threw the piece of wood by faith and the water was healed. What is your staff? Where is your piece of wood? You can pick up a piece of wood from where you are. When you throw it or use it by faith, a miracle will happen. We experience God’s miracle when we do small and ordinary things by faith. Some of us support poor and sick children overseas through World Vision. Their monthly supporting children look like throwing pieces of woods into the water. God blesses their act of love and faith and heals and feed many oversea children.

 Look at verses 25b-26. “There the LORD issued a ruling and instruction for them and put them to the test. He said, “***If you listen carefully to the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you.***” God gave the Israelites his commands and decrees so that they might keep them and be blessed. God gave them his commands and decrees not to restrict their freedom, but to provide real freedom in Him. *Jehovah-rapha* healed not only the bitter water, but also their bitter hearts. The Israelites slaves had been crushed and wounded by Egyptians for 430 years. They had no freedom, no self-esteem, and no future because they were slaves. They were lawless people. God had compassion on them and wanted to heal them and restore them as the people of God, the descendants of Abraham. When they listen to the LORD carefully and do what is right in his eyes, they become godly people and shepherd nation for the whole world. This was why God commanded them to listen to his words carefully and do what is right in his eyes.

 In one way or the other we all need healing. Many people are broken, wounded, crushed, hurt, depressed spiritually, mentally, and physically. There are some who have held grudge against their brothers and sisters more than decades. Their bitterness rottens their bones and hearts. They will never let it go until they become very sick spiritually. Others suffer from complaining spirit for everything. Ingratitude is the cause of spiritual cancer. How can we get healed from these spiritual sicknesses? As God commanded Moses for the Israelites, we have to listen carefully to the LORD and do what is right in his sight. The word of God is medicine and the Holy Spirit is the healing power. *Jehovah-rapha* will heal us when we come to him and obey his words. I pray that we all may meet *Jehovah-rapha* personally. Let us pray for the people of this land to humble themselves, turn from their wicked ways so that their sins can be forgiven and this land be healed by the LORD. (2 Chr 7:14) Amen.

Look at verse 27. “***Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy trees, and they camped there near the water***.” God not only provided the water at Marah, but also led them Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy trees. Elim means ‘Palms’. At Elim there were many palm trees which provided shade and rest, and springs which provided abundant water for the tired travelers. At Elim God restored their desire to continue to journey for the Promised Land. In the course of our pilgrimage to our Promised Land, the kingdom of God, we have to pass Marah by faith until we arrive in Elim. When we endure our bitter and painful toil, we will arrive at the place of rest and comfort, where we can drink the living water freely and abundantly. Surely we will get Elim after we pass Marah. Amen!

Second, *Jehovah-jireh* (The LORD will provide) (16:1-36) The whole Israelite community, more than one million, set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin. It was the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. It was around one month since they started traveling for the Promised Land. They used up all their food which they had brought from Egypt. Now they confronted food shortage. They were hungry in the desert. When they were hungry, they became angry. So, they grumbled against Moses and Aaron and said, “***If only we had died by the LORD’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death***.” (3) They completely forgot how God had provided water at Marah and at Elim. When they were hungry, they forgot the grace of salvation. They regretted that they had come out of Egypt. They blamed Moses and Aaron, but in really they blamed God who had brought them out of Egypt. Ingratitude and bitterness are elements of slave mentality.

How did God deal with these ungrateful hungry people? God promised Moses to provide food for them. Look at verses 4-5. “Then the LORD said to Moses, “***I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days***.” God promised bread from heaven for them. They had to go out every day for their daily bread. Why did God not allow them to have weekly portion or monthly portion of bread, but daily portion of bread? They had to go out every day in order to gather bread from heaven. Verse 4 says that this was God’s test to see whether they would follow his instructions or not. Slaves are moved by the whip of their slave masters. Some pretend to work hard before their masters’ eyes, but they will not work out of their sight. They don’t have to work hard because they are fed anyway. God wanted to heal them from this slave mentality and to make them a people of God who follow the law of God. God wanted them to depend on God every day through daily bread training. God wanted them to come to him, seek him, and find him through daily bread. Through daily bread God wanted to have the vine and branch relations with them so that they might live fruitful lives and become blessing for the whole world. So God made a covenant with them at Mount Sinai, “*Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.*” (Ex 19:5,6)

In the Lord’s Prayer Jesus taught us to pray for our daily bread. “*Give us today our daily bread*.” (Mt 6:11) In his prayer Jesus did not mean only our physical bread for our stomach, but also spiritual food for our soul. Jesus encouraged us to have daily walk with him. Jesus wants us to seek him every day through daily devotion. He wants us to experience his presence, love, and power every day through daily devotion. Do you have daily walk with Christ? Do you come to God everyday through daily devotion?

In verse 5 God asked the Israelites to gather two days’ portions on the sixth day? Why? This was because he wanted them to keep the seventh day holy as the day of Sabbath. In verses 24-26 Moses explained this, “***So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it. “Eat it today,” Moses said, “because today is a Sabbath to the LORD. You will not find any of it on the ground today. Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any***.” It was just before they received the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai. Still God wanted them to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. (Ge 2:3) Sabbath means ‘rest.’ The purpose of the Sabbath was for his people to take rest in God by worshiping him and having fellowship with brothers and sisters. God worked for six days and took rest on the seventh day and blessed the day by making it holy. This is the reason why we Christians keep Sunday, the day Christ rose from the dead, as the day of Sabbath. The Lord’s day, Sunday, should be the day of our rest, comfort, healing, and strength. When we worship the LORD with all our hearts and souls and strength, God will fill our hearts with his love, joy, peace, and hope through the Holy Spirit. God does not want any worshiper to go home with empty hand and dry heart, but with new strength, spirit, and hope. One pastor compared the joy of Sunday worship service to watching a sport game in a stadium. He didn’t mean that we must be very emotional, but he meant that the worship service should be anticipated, excited, and practiced with joy, courage, and strength. In sports game when our team scores and wins, we become so excited that we shout in loud with joy. The worshipers in a church need more spiritual motivation and participation than the sports fans in the stadium. I don’t mean that you can shout during my sermon, but respond to it by saying many Amens.

Moses told the Israelites who had grumbled against him and Aaron to repent. This was because it was not Moses or Aaron whom they opposed, but the LORD God who had brought them out of Egypt. (6-7) Then he told them that the LORD God would bring them with bread in the morning and quail in the evening. Look at verses 13-15. “***That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat.”*** The LORD God provided manna in the morning and quail in the evening. The word “manna” means ‘What is it?’ in Hebrew. They did not know what the manna was. They had never seen such things which looked like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey. (31) That was the bread from heaven provided by the LORD God. It is amazing that the Israelites ate manna for forty years while they were in the desert. If it was provided for one day or one week, some may think that this happened by accident or by nature. But enough amounts of manna for 2 million people were provided for 40 years. This was only the work of God the Almighty. This was the love of *Jehovah-jireh* for his people.

While we are living on this earth as pilgrim, I pray that Jehovah-jireh may lead our journey. We often confront food shortage like the Israelites. Poverty, unemployment, insufficient balance in bank account, payment delinquency, and other financial difficulties make our hearts dark and heavy. We often worry about what to eat, what to wear, how to pay the rent or mortgage or tuition, how to support family, and so on. At that time, we remember the Bible verses and try to overcome fear and anxiety. But in the morning as soon as we open our eyes, fear and anxiety attack us. How can we overcome this situation? How can we restore our joy and strength as people of God? God wants us to listen to him carefully and do what is right in his sight. God wants us to trust in him as *Jehovah-jireh*. God wants us to believe that the LORD will provide all things necessary for his children. Some people say that the reality is reality. They mean that living by faith is one thing, and dealing with the reality is another. But what is the reality? The reality is that there is no one here to starve to death or to walk naked or to become homeless. The reality is that God has provided us with food, house, job, health, and so on beyond our expectation thus far. As he provided manna and quail for the Israelites for 40 years in the desert, he also has provided all things necessary for us to live as children of God. Amen! Let us read Jesus’ promise, Matthew 6:33-34 together. “*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own*.” I pray that we all meet *Jehovah-rapha* and *Jehovah-jireh* while we study this passage. Amen.