

Cornerstone Conversations

I remember one day when my boys were aged 7 and 10 the youngest one Gareth had come home from school 'starving as usual, I was making soup in the kitchen as that was all the food we had, Gareth asked if we could have some bread with it, I told him we didn't have any but we could pray and ask God to give us some. Now I have to admit I wasn't expecting that prayer to be answered but we were trying to teach the boys how we should need and believe in God.

A couple of minutes later the doorbell rang, when I answered it there on doorstep was a young lady called Sharon who lived two doors away. She said "I hope you won't be offended but God told me to come and offer you this' at which point she handed me carrier bag, Sharon went on to tell us that her husband worked in a bakery and he had brought home a large amount of – you guessed it bread and would I like some. At this point Gareth was whooping around the room shouting 'God answers prayers'.

But the most amazing part of this story isn't about answered prayer, or that Sharon listened to God's prompting, or that the bakery had baked too much bread, the truly amazing part was at the bottom of the carrier was iced buns so God had not only provided what we had asked for but a bit 'extra' as well.

Which reminds me of how the Israelites must have felt when, soon after their miraculous escape from Egypt, their stomachs started rumbling. They started grumbling, "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" (Exodus 16:3). A lot could be said about their lack of faith in that moment, but notice God's immediate, generous response: "I will rain down bread from heaven for you" (Exodus 16:4). The people then gathered as *much* as they could eat. How great is that? You'd think, after that, they would have never again doubted God's generosity and His power to supply all their needs. - *Wrong*.

Unfortunately, we are often a lot like them. In times of distress, it's easy to forget God's past generosity and to doubt what God can do—or even what He is *willing* to do—about our problem. We find ourselves grumbling, "Why doesn't He do '*more*' for me?" But we need to be "out" on that kind of thinking, because, actually, God is a God of abundant generosity. In fact, I like to think of Him as a God of "muchness" - with both the desire and capacity to fill our lives with His goodness and grace.

In James 5:1-20 we see the contrast between the leanness of our lives and the muchness of God. James mentions suffering, sickness, and sin—three constant realities that underscore the fact that we are impoverished, needy people. And the antidote is found in prayer. Not ritualistic, passionless prayer, but prayer that is rooted in the reality of our leanness and our desperation for God's muchness. As James reminds us, "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (James 5:16).

So let's praise God for his generosity to help keep us from grumbling, and turn our attention toward the incredible and abundant spiritual blessings that He provides to us His children.

Rev'd. Linda