

A Good Shepherd
Sacred Story

Manna in the Wilderness

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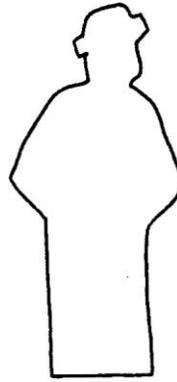
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MANNA IN THE WILDERNESS MA TERIALS

- small wicker basket to hold:
 - wooden figure of Moses
 - wooden figure of Aaron
 - 3 wooden people of God figures



Moses



Aaron



People of God

MANNA IN THE WILDERNESS ••. EXODUS 16

ACTIONS

After speaking, stand and get the story from it's shelf. Return to the circle and sit down, placing the basket next to you.

Gently stroke one or more of the wooden figures to center yourself and the children during the silence.

Trace a short path beginning near yourself and ending several inches away. Place Moses, Aaron and the three people of God figures at that spot.

Shake your head as you say "no".

Place hands, palms down, and then turn them palms up as you speak.

Touch your stomach with an open palm as you speak.

Touch each of the figures, one at a time.

Place the Moses figure slightly apart to the left from the others and touch it as you speak.

Hold up two fingers as you speak of "twice as much".

WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

All the words to this story are inside of me. If you will make silence with me I will find all the words to this story of God's people.

The people of God had escaped from the Egyptians through the Red Sea.

In the wilderness they became afraid because they had no water.

God made water that was poisoned turn good and sweet when Moses threw a tree into it.

Then the people got very hungry.

They complained that God had sent them out into the wilderness to die of hunger.

But Yahweh said to Moses, "I will rain bread from heaven for you. Every day the people will be able to go out and pick it up. Then they will decide if they will walk in my law or not. "

God then told Moses that on the sixth day, the day before Sabbath, they should bring in twice as much manna so they would not have to work picking it up on the Sabbath.

Move Aaron next to Moses and turn them to face the people.

Lift one hand up to indicate God.

Touch the Aaron figure.

Move all the figures close to Moses and Aaron.

Touch one or more of the people of God figures as you speak.

Move one hand in an arc several times, each time ending on the floor to indicate birds flying and dropping there.

Open your hand and cover a large area on the floor.

Gently touch the floor and pick up imaginary manna.

Touch the Moses figure as you speak.

Set one of the people of God figures off to the right.

First nod and then hold up one finger as you speak of the "only day".

So Moses and his brother, Aaron, told all the people, "In the evening God will bring you meat and in the morning God will give you bread and then you will know that it was Yahweh who brought you from Egypt. "

They told the people that Yahweh had heard their voices crying for food.

Then Moses told Aaron to call all the people together.

When they were all gathered, the glory of Yahweh appeared in the form of a cloud and Yahweh told Moses that the voices of the people had been heard.

Then Yahweh said there would be meat for them to eat in the evening and bread in the morning.

That evening quails, large birds, came up and covered the camp ground. The people could easily catch them and kill and cook them.

The next morning when the people woke up there was white, sticky stuff on the ground.

The people touched it and ate it. It was sweet and filling.

Moses told them to take only what they needed.

Some people tried to take extra to save for the next day, but it became full of worms.

Each day God sent the manna to the people that they needed. The only day they could keep extra was the day before the Sabbath. And that manna never got worms in it.

Hold an imaginary piece of manna in your hand as though it is very precious.

Pretend you are placing the manna in a jar.

Lean forward and emphasize the word "forty". Gently touch one or more of the wooden figures.

Carefully place all the wooden figures in the basket.

After speaking, stand and return the story to the shelf. Return to the circle and sit down.

Be certain each child has had the opportunity to choose their work before dismissing the circle.

Then Yahweh told them to save a small piece of manna to remember that Yahweh had been the one to feed them in the wilderness.

So they placed a piece of the manna in a jar and kept it.

Yahweh sent manna to the people for forty years until they came into the land Yahweh had promised them.

WONDERING QUESTIONS:

I wonder what manna tastes like?

I wonder if I would like to eat quail?

I wonder if I would believe that Yahweh would bring me food?

I wonder how it feels to have no food in your house?

Watch carefully how I put these materials away so you will know how to use them if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

Watch carefully where I return this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

I wonder what you will do for your work today? Let's go around the circle and decide what each person wants to do.

MANNA IN THE WILDERNESS TEACHER HELPS

It is so hard for us to imagine that the people of Israel doubted God so quickly. After all they had just been led through the Red Sea on dry ground and had seen their enemies drowned before their eyes. They had bitter or poisoned water made sweet for them. Everywhere they turned, God had provided. Yet they just couldn't be sure -- after all there was no food in their pantries and they questioned how they would feed their families. Maybe we would have been the same way.

Yahweh heard, again, the cries of the people of God and answered them through Moses. Moses was told that God would provide food from heaven. The theological message of this story is just that. It is God who provides. It is God who sets the parameters and God who expects the obedience of the people. After the grace-filled act of giving the people food, God makes sure the rest of the story is played out as God would have it. Those who try to be secure of their own right by keeping extra food find that it has rotted while they slept. Those who go out on the Sabbath to collect the food are chastised by God for not believing that God meant what God said.

We also have the command to keep some of the manna. God's people are constantly called to remember. They are to remember that they were slaves, that God delivered them and that God has promised good to them. They are to keep the manna so that "through the generations" their children and children's children will see how God fed the people God had chosen. It is good for us to ask what we would have our children remember. Are we helping our children create memories that include God's actions in our lives and our stories of faith? Or, are we raising a generation of children whose only common memories will be thirty minute sitcoms or a fear of talking to strangers? What do we want our children's common memories to be?

The Bible, as usual, is also interested in social action in this story. Notice that God does not condemn the people for being hungry and crying out to be fed. God does not tell them, "If you really wanted to work, you could find a way to feed your family." Instead, God gives hungry people what they need the most -- food. And along with the food comes the promise that they will have the food as long as they need it. God doesn't promise them roast lamb each day, but God does promise them bread, which is basic and satisfying. God also gives them the dignity of having to do something to get it. They must go out and gather up that which God has provided for them.

The wondering questions deal with the food issue. First, we wonder what manna tastes like. You may wish to share with the children, after their responses, that the Bible says it was sweet and sticky. But first let the children explore that a bit. Would God have given the people food that did not taste good?

The second question deals with quail. Very few children anymore are exposed to the butchering of meat or poultry. They may be very curious about how the people would eat the quail. I wonder if any of the children have plucked a chicken or pheasant? There may be some children who have eaten quail. If so let them talk about it. Otherwise, you may wish to talk about chicken as a similar meat. Remember the idea is to get the children to a place where their experience has touched a spot they will recognize in the story.

The third question is one each of us must answer. Would any of us have believed God would feed us when we had no food with us and no apparent resource to get that food? The youngest children will probably be the most positive, with older children more willing to express skepticism. Remind all of them that there are no right or wrong answers. Remind yourself too. The four year old is as serious about her response to the question as the 12 year old is, his.

The final question is one that hopefully no child will be able to answer from experience. But since poverty reaches everywhere in our land, don't be surprised to find a child who talks about having no bread or milk for days. There may be children in your church who have access to food through a food pantry. It is very important to keep the dignity of these children intact. You can facilitate that by reminding the children that God provides for all of us in different ways. Some children have parents who work to be able to buy food. In some families the food is provided by other people who care for them, like grandparents or sisters and brothers. Still other families have food provided by places that care for them, like churches and food pantries and shelters. We can take our model from the Old Testament Yahweh who simply fed the people when they were hungry.

It can be fun to eat a sticky sweet roll or donut and wonder if manna tasted anything like this. This should be at the discretion of the teacher in each class.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

As long as the people of God needed food in the wilderness, Yahweh provided it. When they no longer need it, God stopped providing the food. What does that tell us about how we are to deal with poor, hungry people?

The story tells us that for forty years the people of God ate manna every day. They had what they needed to stay alive, although it may not have been what they wanted. Share a time when you had what you needed, even though it wasn't what you wanted. How did you respond?

This whole story is about God providing for God's people when they were hungry. What would you say to a homeless, hungry person who says, "God must not love me, because God isn't providing me with food. "?