

In hard times, two of the most common questions that we might ask are why and how. We ask the question why? Why, O Lord, has this come upon us? Why are we dealing with this? Why do we have a nation which has been thrown into turmoil over the virus? Why does it seem like everything has gone crazy? And we also ask the question how? How are we going to get out of this? How are we going to get through this, O Lord? How will you deliver us from this problem? And these questions of why and how are the questions that face us in every hard time. And the reason why they're so common for us, the reason why they come up so often, is because they are the questions of our heart. What are we looking at in the midst of all of our troubles?

Because when we ask the question why, we're often looking backwards, back to what used to be, back to the good times, back to the things that came before, wondering why we just can't go back to them and get away from all of our present problems. But when we ask the question how, we are very often looking at the problem itself. How do we get out of this problem? How do we get over this thing that is in front of us? And we look at these things and focus on these things, and that's why these questions arise in our hearts. But Christians, God is not calling us to wonder why and how, to look at the things behind, or to look at the things in front of us. God is calling us to look at him, to keep our eyes fixed on him in the face of every difficulty, because he is the one who can take care of us no matter what.

In our readings for today, Israel was facing similar kinds of problems. They had two very different times, two very different places, but very similar situations, wondering how God was going to take care of them in the midst of all of their problems. And they were looking at the problems that were in front of them instead of at God. Because Israel in the time of Moses, for example, had just come out of Egypt. God had delivered them from their bondage to slavery and brought them out into the wilderness. Two million of them or more were all of the people that went out into that wilderness. But now they're faced with a very real problem. How are they going to get enough to eat? There were no towns in that wilderness. There were no farms, no fields. No other people lived in that giant area. And how were they going to find enough to feed two million or more? And so that's why Israel is asking that question in our reading for today. Why? Why have you brought us out into this wilderness? Are you trying to kill us? We had it so much better back in Egypt. We had it so much better because we had bread to eat. We had meat to eat. We had it good. Now you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill us.

And we might look down on Israel for that kind of faithlessness. We might look down on them and wonder how they would even say such a thing. Because it wasn't all that long ago that they had just come out of Egypt, only two months, in fact. Two months ago, they had been delivered from Egypt by the great plagues. Two months ago, they had walked through literal walls of water on either side of them. They had seen the power of God firsthand. And things weren't even all that great back in Egypt, because two months ago, they were still slaves oppressed by Pharaoh, oppressed by the Egyptians, and living terrible lives. And yet now they want to go back to it, because they think they had it so much better. And we might look down on them and wonder how they could say such a thing. But Christians, we're not all that different from them. Because just two months ago in our own country, we were worried and concerned about war, war with Iran, war with lots of other nations, wondering what was going to happen in the days ahead. And over the past couple of months, we have heard the Word of God. We have heard his promises. And yet here we are, now, in this time and in this place, wondering why we are in the situation that we're in. Christians, we're not so different from Israel after all.

But questions demand answers, don't they? We want to find some kind of answer. And Israel wanted an answer to the question why. They wanted to know what they were supposed to do. And so they looked towards the meat pots of Egypt. They looked back towards the things that they had, forgetting how terrible it actually was, thinking that that was what they needed, that that would be the solution to all of

their problems. But God doesn't call us to look backwards towards the meat pots of Egypt, Christians. God wants us to look towards him and to trust in him above all things.

But now we fast forward in time to Israel again in the wilderness in the days of Jesus, five thousand men or more who had come out to hear Jesus preach and teach. And while they were there, no one had bothered to bring any food. And so they're wondering, how are they going to get enough to eat? How are they going to be able to survive out in this wilderness? Apart from food, apart from help, apart from any other people. It seemed like there was no way to solve this problem. And so they asked the question how? How can we get enough bread to feed all of these people? How is this going to be solved in God's good time? Even the apostles themselves were asking, how are we going to get enough money to buy all of these people even a little bit to eat?

Again, we might be tempted to look down on them, to wonder how they could be so faithless? Can't they remember all of the good things that God had done? They had seen Jesus turn water into wine. They had seen Jesus heal the sick. They had seen him walk on water. How had they forgotten so quickly the power of God? But don't we do the same, Christians? God has come to us and has done all of these wonderful things for us, making great promises to us. And yet in the face of trouble, we so quickly wonder how God can deliver us. We're not so different from the apostles either. We also struggle with the power of God. We also struggle with the things of God, wondering how he's going to take care of us.

But questions demand answers. And the people of Israel in the time of Jesus turned towards quick and easy solutions, towards bread kings. Because they wanted to make Jesus into a king, not the king of Israel, but the king who would fix their problems here and now. The bread king who would take care of them quickly so that they could get back to business as usual. But Christians, we are not called to look for bread kings either. We are called to look towards the Lord our God, who will provide us with all things.

Because Jesus, dear Christians, is not calling us to look towards the bread pots of Egypt. He's not calling us to look for bread kings. He's calling us to look towards him, because he is the one who's going to take care of us. He is the one who will give us all things. When all of these things which we face in the world seem so overwhelming, so difficult, God will still take care of us no matter what. Because remember, it was God himself who rained down bread from heaven and gave to the people of Israel quail in abundance, quail without number, so that he fed his people in that wilderness and gave them the things that they needed. He showed that he was the Lord their God, and that he can do all things. And Jesus too took those loaves of bread and those fish and multiplied them in the wilderness to take care of them and provide for their needs, to show them that he is the Lord their God, that he can do all things, and that he will be with them always. Christians, God calls us to trust in him. Because even though we may not have the answers that we seek, the answers to the questions that we ask, we don't need them. We don't need to know why, because God does all things for our good. We don't need to know how, because God's arm is not shortened, and he can do all things. Nothing is too hard for God. God calls us to trust in him, to follow after him in the wilderness, so that we would know that he is the Lord our God.

So trust in him, Christians. Don't go after the meat pots of Egypt. Don't go after bread kings. They can't help you. Follow after the Lord your God, because he is the one who will take care of you in every place and time. Even if we have to walk through water and fire, he will still take care of us. Even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, our great and good Shepherd will take care of us forever. God will deliver us, Christians, in every circumstance and in every time, because he is the

Lord our God, and he can do all things.

Now to him who is the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega, to whom, and from whom, and through whom are all things be all glory, honor and worship, now and forever. Amen.