

## Promises of Provision

Yesterday we focussed on God's promises of His presence and how we can offer our presence to other people.

Today we will focus on God's provision – what that looks like in our daily lives.

Really, we can't experience God's presence without also experiencing His provision.

The very first people God created – Adam and Eve –enjoyed God's presence every day had everything they needed. God had made them a beautiful world and garden to live in. They didn't need to worry about clothes, food, shelter or work –it was all there.

Unfortunately because they decided to disobey God, they forfeited all this, but when people come back into a right relationship with God, spend time in His presence, learning how to live the way He wants - He always provides everything they need.

When Moses and the people of Israel were wandering around in the desert, God showed His presence with them by fire and cloud.

He gave them food every day and their shoes and clothes did not wear out during the forty years they were there. God faithfully provided their daily needs.

Joseph, who was laughed at and betrayed by his brothers, was falsely accused by his master's wife was thrown into prison. Yet we read: "but the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success" – or blessed him in everything he did.

He was promoted to an important position in charge of all the resources in the land. God provided Joseph with job security, promotion and job satisfaction and also a way to show grace and mercy and provide for his family.

Psalms 23 outlines many ways that God provides for His people.

Notice the connections between God's presence and God's provision in this Psalm.

The Lord is my shepherd. I have EVERYTHING that I need.

He gives:

- rest
- new strength
- guidance
- security
- protection
- comfort

- food
- restitution
- anointing
- goodness and love for all my life on earth
- promise of a place in heaven with Him forever

With all these wonderful promises of provision, isn't it sad to read in Malachi 3: 8 - 12 that people rob God! They rob Him by not giving back to Him what is rightfully His – a tithe or 1/10<sup>th</sup> of all their income.

You see there are principles to follow if we want God to provide for us and to experience His blessing materially and spiritually in our lives and one of these is tithing.

That means giving 10% of all your income to God. It doesn't matter if you earn a little or earn a lot or receive a benefit. 10% of all your income belongs to God – no argument. This is a principle that says you are prepared to put God first and to trust Him for providing for all your needs.

If you have never tithed – then I encourage you to start today and make it a way of life – a way to show that you acknowledge that everything you own-ultimately came from a loving God.

You don't need to buy a Lotto ticket or Lucky Strike or enter a raffle hoping to win something. In fact, that just shows a lack of faith that God will provide for you. You are already incredibly blessed if you are a child of God, because God doesn't just provide for our needs – like any good parent, He delights to give us “extras” – things that we might want -just for the pleasure it gives Him to see our surprise and joy.

Matthew 7: 9 – 12. Read.

Notice that the “Golden Rule” is included in this set of verses. If you expect to get good things and enjoy delightful surprises, then God expects you to do the same for other people.

These verses are part of a group of teachings that Jesus gave beginning with the Beatitudes – reminding us of how blessed we are if we display the characteristics of a Christian – and including teaching on giving to the needy, storing up treasures, not worrying about what we need and asking for what we need.

Wow! Such a lot of teaching about Provision!

Let's have a closer look at the bit about "Treasures". In New Zealand we have a tendency to accumulate "STUFF"! And the more stuff we accumulate, the more time we have to spend looking after it, maintaining it, storing it, protecting it, increasing its value and insuring it. Sounds like a lot of stress just to keep "stuff".

I love Op Shops and I'm a sucker for "pre-loved" and bargains, but with the deaths of my mum and mother-in-law in recent years, I've realised that you can't take all these things with you when you go and it's a massive job for families to dispense it or dispose of it. So in order to be kind to our boys, I've seriously started to declutter (I just hope I live long enough to get rid of most of it!)

Along with that, I've also asked God to give me a more generous heart. It's easy to hold onto things and justify owning them, but what joy comes from giving – just for the sake of it!

Making up a food parcel and delivering it, putting more into the church offering, sponsoring a young person to go to camp, giving someone a voucher for food, clothes or petrol, donating or recycling stuff back to the Op shops are some of the ways I'm learning to be more generous.

If you've seen the movie "Paying it Forward" you'll see how much fun it is to give – paying for the groceries of someone behind you at the supermarket or paying for someone filling with petrol and seeing the surprise on their faces when they are told it's already been paid for. I love watching "Good Sorts" on Sunday night news and seeing how people are giving their time and their skills to others.

You know what happens when you are generous?     Apart from the warm fuzzies?

You actually stop worrying about the things that you need!

I can just imagine Jesus teaching about worry –

"You're worried about what you're going to eat! If you've got enough food??? Just look at the birds, are they hoarding? Stressing? No! They know God provides for them!

You're worried about clothes? What goes together? What you'll wear to that event? If you'll look good in that? Well, have a look at the flowers – are they stressing??? No, God takes care of it all and they are perfectly arrayed. So stop worrying!

The passage ends with: "but seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well" vs 33.

There it is again – God's presence!            His kingdom.            His righteousness!

And when we seek them through

- spending time in His presence - abiding in Him,

- when our heart is in the right place,- wanting what HE wants,
- when we have our priorities right,
- when we are prepared to put other people first

**Then** He gives us EVERYTHING that we need!

I'd like to give you an example of how God knew exactly what I needed last week and how he provided it.

Last week held a lot of deadlines for me from my work and pressures from other things in our lives. I was becoming increasingly tired and feeling like with the pressure building up, I wasn't going to cope. Added to this pressure, I was asked at short notice to rewrite a chapter of a book about inclusion and disability in a different style – with a deadline of Monday!

On Thursday afternoon I came home from work and as my husband was away, I had uninterrupted time to work on the book. I worked steadily till 10.00 that night, but still wasn't finished. I imagined myself leaving camp on Sunday afternoon to go home and finish writing before going out to another function late afternoon.

As I was cleaning my teeth before going to bed, the power went off! It was only our house, something was causing a short that made all the power shut down. I was too tired to worry about it and went to sleep thinking I'll deal with it in the morning. So after having breakfast by candlelight (try it sometime!), I contacted our son who is an electrician to come and find out what was wrong. He asked me to leave a key out for him.

Fine, I thought, everything's sorted so I got ready for work, put the dog in the car and went to back out of the garage. Oh no! I couldn't get out, the garage door wouldn't open cause there was no power! I couldn't go to work!

God so graciously gave me a legitimate reason for having the morning off work and I managed to complete the book chapter and submit it – leaving me with a free mind to come to camp. Isn't he good! He knows EVERYTHING that I need!

Can I ask you what it is you need? Is it a job? Is it a home? Is it friends? Is it money? Is it food? Clothes? A carer? Transport? Respite? A holiday? Equipment?

God says "stop worrying about it – I already know that you need it".

Not worrying is not the same as doing nothing, because we read further down in these groups of teaching in Matthew 7: 7 to

**Ask**                    and it will be given to you,  
**seek**                    and you will find,  
**knock**                    and the door will be opened to you.”

Ask, seek and knock are verbs – they’re action words.

Our salvation, our sanctification, our living out the Christian life - are not passive processes – they require action.

This is again a Biblical principle – if you do this – then this will happen.

Build an ark – and I’ll save your family from the flood.

March seven times around the wall of Jericho and I’ll defeat the city.

Get out of the boat- and you’ll walk on water.

Give – and it will be given to you – full measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over!

I’ve travelled quite a bit and it strikes me that the people in the poorest countries are the most generous and are happy to be generous, even though they don’t have much themselves.

Strange isn’t it – you’d expect people that are rich or who have plenty to be generous – and some are – but when a person who has very little gives to another person – just to bless them – that touches your heart.

David was a man who learnt a lot through his life.

He was called “a man after God’s heart” – he spent a lot of time in God’s presence, getting to know Him, worshipping Him, asking for forgiveness and listening to Him.

Here’s what he said when he was an old man:

Ps 37: 25 – 28

*I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging for bread.*

*They are always generous and lend freely; their children will be blessed.*

*Turn from evil and do good; then you will always live securely.*

*For the Lord loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones.*

This weekend we have looked at some of the promises of God for His presence and His provision. I hope you have noted them.

- Underline them in your Bible,
- use them as wallpaper and screen savers on your mobile devices,
- put them on cards around your home, on your wheelchairs, walkers,
- record them on your Dynavox or Braille machine or iPod.
- memorise them.

Because these promises become like anchors to stop us drifting into doubt and self-pity. They give us hope, remind us of God's goodness and remind us that He will never leave us, never forsake us and that He will constantly and faithfully provide everything that we need every day of our lives until we are finally taken to be with Him forever, and where we will have everything that we have ever needed.

### Prayer

*Jehovah Jireh we come into your presence with grateful hearts. You are indeed our great Provider. More than we ask, more than we could even dream of – you have blessed us. We ask that our hearts would echo your heartbeat. That we would be filled with compassion for those less fortunate than ourselves – that we would know the joy of generous spirits – that we would love as you love.*

*Holy Spirit, take these messages from you and implant them deep in our minds. Engrave them on our hearts. Prompt us every day to put into action the things you have been teaching us. Help us in times of doubt and self-pity to hold onto the truth that you will never, ever; let us down.*

*Now, to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence with great joy – to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forever more! Amen*