11.01.26 ~ Pentecost 23 with Communion & Covenant
"Jesus As Harvest & Eternal Bread of Life"
The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

Words of Generosity

Exodus 16:11-18, 31-32 NIV Pew Bible 60

11 The Lord said to Moses, 12 "I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell
them, 'At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with
bread. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.'"
13 That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a
layer of dew around the camp. 14 When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on
the ground appeared on the desert floor. 15 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. 16 This is what the
Lord has commanded: 'Everyone is to gather as much as they need. Take an *omer*
for each person you have in your tent.'"
17 The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. 18 And when
they measured it by the *omer*, the one who gathered much did not have too much,
and the one who gathered little did not have too little. Everyone had gathered just as
much as they needed.

31 The people of Israel called the bread manna. It was white like coriander seed and
tasted like wafers made with honey. 32 Moses said, "This is what the Lord has
commanded: 'Take an *omer* of manna and keep it for the generations to come, so
they can see the bread I gave you to eat in the wilderness when I brought you out of
Egypt.'"

Leader: These Are the Words of God. People: Thanks be to God!

Words of Instruction

John 6:35-51 ESV Pew Bible 928

35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger,
and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. 36 But I said to you that you have seen
me and yet do not believe. 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and
whoever comes to me I will never cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven,
not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him
who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on
the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son
and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."
41 So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came
down from heaven." 42 They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father
and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"
43 Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. 44 No one can come to
me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last
day. 45 It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone
who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— 46 not that anyone has
seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. 47 Truly, truly, I

say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. [48] I am the bread of life. [49] Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. [50] This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. [51] I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

Leader: These Are the Words of Jesus. People: Thanks be to God!

Please pray with me:
Generous and loving God, we come to you in worship as humble as the lost Israelites in the desert. We slept well and thank you for the time change, but realize our bodies are hungry for your presence and your words of assurance and provision. We thank you for another week of life and beauty, even amid whatever difficulties we face. With the death of flowers and leaves comes rest and growth we do not see until spring. We thank you for the Kingdom work you are doing in our community and ask for your strength and renewal from today's study of God's mercy and Jesus' sacrifice. Help us to hear a personal and church message in these words. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Today, for some, is considered Holy All Saints Day. In the United States, the day before is Halloween, associated with death, treats, and costumes, and has lost any religious connection. Our culture spends tons of money decorating houses and yards in preparation. In the Catholic tradition and practice, churches celebrate all those who have entered heaven, including saints who are recognized by the Church and those who are not. However, following the Protestant Reformation, some Protestants retained the holy day, although they dismissed the need to pray for the dead. Instead, the day has been used to commemorate those who have recently died, usually in the past year, and to remember the examples of those who lived holy lives. In our church, we do NOT celebrate this day, but rather practice the same custom of remembering our members lost on what we call Memorial Sunday, during the Memorial Day weekend in May. Since November 1st falls on the first Sunday of the month when our church typically does Communion, we'll be remembering Jesus' death on

©2026. Rev. Pamela Moyer, The United Baptist Church

the cross and his resurrection through the elements of juice and bread in communion.

In keeping with this year's theme, *Roots and Branches*, we have studied botanical and arbor-oriented scriptures to help us broaden our view of Christian life, its foundations, preparing the soil, planting, nourishment, watering, growth, and stability. During our holy days, Lent, Easter, Advent, and Christmas, we turn to the Revised Common Lectionary for the familiar stories and lessons. This fall, we've done several lessons on harvest, reaping, stewardship, mission, and evangelism. There is a plan for our church year.

Today, in our first passage, the harvest is not fruit from a growing tree, but a substance God provided each day for his lost children, holy manna. You know the background story of Exodus 16. The people have run out of food, especially meat to eat; it only lasted forty-three days. They begin to murmur and grumble about Moses' leadership and plans to save them from Egypt. Some are even yearning for the "fleshpots" of Egypt rather than to be stranded in the desert wilderness. God hears their distress and disturbances. They are in a place where they must trust God, so he uses it to teach them a deep theological truth about his providential power and love. They had seen his love and saving power before as they crossed the Red Sea in Exodus 14. So now, God promises them a speedy, sufficient, and constant supply of food. We read the exact instructions in today's first passage. Can you imagine, in today's world of consumption and hoarding, the people only gathering enough for each day? Our faith is probably too small for that type of obedience as well. Some did not obey

©2026. Rev. Pamela Moyer, The United Baptist Church

God's instructions through Moses, and found the manna went bad, putrid even. But they had enough quail or pheasants and manna to survive.

What was manna? The historical image is a sweet, sticky, honeylike juice that comes in heavy drops in May or June from a shrub found in the desert near where the people were wandering. It melts in the heat of the sun, after falling on the earth in grains. It has the flavor of honey. The Arabs believed that it fell from heaven with the dew. The children of Israel had not seen it so its presence felt mysterious and divine, but it is also referenced in Numbers 11. Its nutritional properties filled the bodies' needs for sustenance, and its mystery filled the spiritual needs and beliefs of God's chosen people. There are hundreds of edible plants in the American Sonoran Desert and Native cultures, harvested for food and medicinal purposes for centuries. In fact, cactus fruits, in general, are known for being high in vitamins A and C, while other parts of edible desert plants provide good sources of protein. Even in the dryest desert, these fruits provide a dewy substance to assist hydration. There was enough manna for all.

The instruction about collecting two portions of manna on the sixth day of the week was an early direction about observing the Sabbath. That had been a lifelong habit, so it made sense that God would observe the Sabbath by not making them work on that day. Do we truly honor that day of rest in our culture today? Many activities have usurped our focus on Sabbath rest, so I encourage you to reinvest in it and teach to your children. Not only is spiritual focus necessary, but the physical body is designed for at least one day of rest. If you work on Sundays, then find a

©2026. Rev. Pamela Moyer, The United Baptist Church

different day to practice Sabbath practices like prayer, study, and physical rest. These practices keep us connected with the giver of life itself.

The true bread from heaven and source of life was not the manna which perished and was given by Moses, but Jesus himself, even though his disciples and followers did not yet understand this fact. The grumbling in our second passage recalls the murmuring in our first. They knew Jesus as Joseph's boy, not as the divine son of God. But we know the rest of the story!

As we studied earlier in the year, Jesus himself is root, trunk, and branch of our faith, and though we help to bear fruit by sharing our faith, he is our core. Jesus is the resurrection and the life, the way, the truth, and the vine from which we gain all our sustenance, especially eternal life. Our salvation comes through him, not just as a substitute for our sin on the cross, but as the Word, seated at the right hand of God the father. Jesus didn't just teach the word of God, but he lived it, embodied it, and multiplied it so that we could participate and be in relationship with the triune God, father, son, and Holy Spirit. That is conversion: repentance from sin, acceptance of forgiveness, surrendering our egos, and willingness to be pruned, to be taught, to learn, be transformed, be sanctified into his likeness, and to worship and love Jesus. None of this will be completed for us to see until eternity and Jesus' return, but we come each week to try and to prepare ourselves to receive and act on that love, grace, and mercy. This is why we celebrate the Lord's Supper. Jesus is himself the very bread of life. What we do today is a symbol of his love and sacrifice. We believe in him. Let us renew our relationship and our commitment in the breaking of bread. Amen? Amen. ||

©2026. Rev. Pamela Moyer, The United Baptist Church

***Please pray with me*:** Thank you Lord for the guidance you give us through your Scriptures each week. May we never forget that you have called us into relationship and service. Empower us to share our faith stories with others. Help us to stay close to your word and world through our actions. Be with us in this memorial meal so that we can taste and see that you are good and always present. Keep our eyes upon you and your mission; guide our steps. We pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen.

©2026. Rev. Pamela Moyer, The United Baptist Church