

Laetare
St. John 6:1-15

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Laetare, rejoice!

Jehovah Jireh has provided. As it is written, "In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided." (Genesis 22:14b) The hand was stayed, the sacrifice prevented, and caught in the thicket was a ram to take the place of the boy. Vicariously, the ram is sacrificed, and the boy lives. There was much rejoicing of the two that day as they made their way down the mountain.

Laetare, rejoice!

Jehovah Jireh has provided. The people had been freed from oppression and slavery. They were allowed to leave and go into the wilderness to sacrifice and freely worship YHWH, though they were pursued for a time. The LORD had provided freedom, but His provision didn't end there as He provided bread from heaven, manna, and quail—flakes of sustenance and meat from the throne of the Almighty. Surely, there was much rejoicing as the people left the land, as Pharaoh and his host drowned in the sea, as they gathered the bread the first few times.

Laetare, rejoice!

Jehovah Jireh has provided. On a mountain across the Sea of Galilee Jesus had retreated to find some solitude, but a multitude followed Him. Jesus had taught them for a few days, and they followed Him because of the great miracles He had performed. They were hungry by this point, and it was too late to send them home, so Jesus asks, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" Their coffers couldn't supply what was needed, but there was a boy with five barley loaves and two small fish, "But what are they among so many?" The answer is a banquet at the hands of Jesus, with more leftovers than when they had started. There was much rejoicing that night as the people were fed with bread from One from heaven.

Laetare, rejoice...indeed.

God gives, and the people receive and misconstrue. Jesus feeds 5000 men, women and children notwithstanding, and they seek to make Him king by force. If Jesus is able to do that with so little food for such a great number of people, then He can certainly work a few miracles and straighten things out around the world—cure diseases, mend palsied limbs, cast out demons and keep them out, end famine and drought, bring and end to the enemies of Israel, end Promised Land occupation once-and-for-all, bring about world peace. He could be the kind of king that would give them everything they want, be the kind of Messiah they wanted.

Laetare, rejoice....indeed.

God gives, and the people receive and complain anyway. God sends bread and meat from heaven, sustaining His people in their great exodus, and the people accuse Him of bringing them out there to die. They craved more than what God was giving them.

Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!" (Number 11:4-6)

Of course, there was more going on than God simply feeding them with manna and quail:

Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers. And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, **that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.** Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. (Deuteronomy 8:1-4, emphasis mine)

Laetare, rejoice...indeed.

On the mountain, YHWH provided the ram to spare the life of Isaac. He and his father sacrificed the ram and made it back down the mountain, but what next? God blessed Him, but he still lived with doubt. Certainly there had to have been times when Abraham and Isaac transgressed the will and law of God, as if to negate the redemption that God had shown and given to Isaac.

Where is rejoicing? Where is thankfulness?

Laetare, rejoice...indeed.

God provides for all of your needs of body and soul. He gives you clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, land, animals, and all that you have. He gives you your body and soul, eyes, ears and all of your members, your reason and all of your senses, and He still takes care of them. He gives you all that you need to support your body and life—it may not be daily quantities of manna and quail, or making a few loaves and fish a feast for thousands, or causing a little flour and a little oil last through a famine (cf. 1 Kings 17:16), but one way or another, God provides the means that meet the needs of your body and soul.

Furthermore, He defends you against all dangers and guard and protects you from all evil. This one is a little harder, as the defense and protection can be impossible to notice, especially in times of illness, suffering, persecution, and death. These evils happen, it would seem, in spite of God's defense and protection. Yet even through them, contrary to your reason and beyond your understanding, God works to defend and protect you.

You are His, and He provides for you. Jehovah Jireh continues to provide. He provides without your prayers, even to all evil people. But you pray, whether you realize it or not, that you would be led to realize that God provides, and that you would receive your daily bread with thanksgiving. So, have you thanked your God for His provision today...this week...this month...these past 12 months...at all?

Or are you like the people on the mountain beside the Sea of Galilee? Is God nothing more to you than One upon whom you call when ever you feel the need for something...whenever you want something? You suffer some personal tragedy, and you call upon God to relieve you of it. You lack something you want, and you call upon God to give it to you. And when you don't get what you want or exactly what you want or what you think you need, you blame God like the Children of Israel in the wilderness.

Nevertheless, God hears your prayers. He knows what you need, better than you know. He provides you with exactly what it is you need. He even provides you with what you need for more than this body and this life.

Laetare, rejoice!

Jehovah Jireh has provided. On the Mount of the Lord, it is provided as a lamb has taken your place, vicariously sacrificed in your stead. There, on that Mount, the Bread of Life from heaven is given for all as food for Life, like the manna from heaven, but so much more. On this Mount, outside of Jerusalem, called Skull, Jesus, the enfleshed God, gave His life as the vicarious atonement for all men, sacrificed like the ram in the place of Isaac, but so much more.

There, on Calvary's holy mountain, the propitiation that brings you peace with God was provided, once-for-all. Now, you are gathered here, at this holy mountain, to receive from your providential God everything that He has to give to bring you from this life into the life to come—the medicine of immortality. For you receive by ear the Word of God that declares to you the forgiveness of sins and by mouth the Bread of Heaven, manna, as it were, which is the very body of God, Jesus Christ, and sip of wine which is the very blood of God, Jesus Christ, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

Laetare, rejoice!

For God Himself takes your place under His own wrath. He would not see you die for your sins (cf. Ezekiel 18:32; 33:11), but dies for you, providing you with righteousness which you did not work, but which He Himself, in His Son, Jesus Christ, has wrought for you. This He gives to you freely, out of His fatherly, divine goodness and mercy; He is your Father, and you His precious child, one with His only-begotten Son by way of baptism into His death and resurrection. He died that you may live. You have died with Christ so now you will live with Him for ever. (cf. Romans 6:8) He became your sin for you; now, you are the righteousness of God in Him. (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21)

Laetare, rejoice!

Jehovah Jireh has provided. He has provided His Son as your propitiation, and so you are forgiven for all of your sins.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.