"Provision" (God Sightings: When GOD Shows Up – Pt. 2)
(Deut. 8:2-4, Matt. 15:29-39)

- **God's Miracles, Our Messes**
  - This whole month we're talking about ***"God Sightings: When GOD Shows Up"*** because it's a part of *our story* as a church for the past 25 years! It's all over *God's Story* in Scripture, too. "Miracle stories" reveal so much about *who God is* and *how we walk with Him*. There can be a whole range of situations, from really small and personal, to really big and world-changing. We call them "miracles," but the Bible most often refers to them as *"signs."* The common O.T. word for "miracle" means *beacon, signal, flag,* or *monument*. This is really important for this series, because we're exploring different kinds of "miracles" each week—***Provision, Deliverance, Healing,*** and ***Resurrection***. These supernatural experiences are *so amazing* that we can get *enamored* with the events themselves. But if you realize they're just *signs* pointing us to something much greater, you see them for what they are: *God Sightings*—they point us to God.
    - We might be intrigued by the prospect of being *awed* by a *supernatural encounter*, but the reality is never that glamorous! Every miracle story in Scripture comes *in a time of desperate need*. It's not about people who are spiritually bored, or seeking superficial proof. It's about God entering the *mess* of our world to advance His Kingdom. It's about coming to the absolute *limit* of our capacities, where all we have is *desperation and faith*. Miracles are *wonderful*, but the situations they come to are *anything but*. Talk to anyone who's seen real miracles and you'll find someone who's experienced *real trails*. If we want to see *God Sightings* today, we need to be willing to let faith lead us beyond our comfort zone, and to see *obstacles as opportunities* for *God* to just show up. Today, our focus is on ***Provision***.
- **God's Abundance, Our Scarcity**
  - *Most of us* have a complicated relationship with *provision*, with "enough." Most of us experience our places of *lack* or *need* as places of *fear, anxiety, insecurity*—maybe with rare moments of *contentment* and *blessing* sprinkled in. We *know*

Jesus has better for us, but we struggle in the daily grind to *abide* there. Welcome to human experience, welcome to the world as we know it. We just looked at Genesis: we remember how God created this blessed, abundant world in the beginning, we remember Eden, deep in our hearts. But the world *we* know is *out of Eden*: the cursed ground, the toil, thorns and thistles, blood, sweat and tears.

- Be honest: how often in this life do you have to fight against a sinking feeling *that there will never be enough.* That no matter how much you try to balance your life and get rest, *you'll never feel rested enough*. No matter how much you struggle to pay off the bills and get some breathing room, *you'll never get ahead.* No matter how many times you fix the next thing, *there's always going to be another breakdown.* No matter how hard you work to prove your worth, *you'll never be confident enough, gifted enough, fortunate enough* to make it. I know I'm not speaking to *everyone*, this isn't the struggle for some of you—but I know I'm speaking to *many of you*—and to myself!
- *Will I ever make it to "enough"?* This is the mindset of the world, the daily struggle for most people. We know, if we follow Jesus, this is *not the mindset we were made for*—but even after we surrender our lives to God, we struggle to let our old ways of thinking be transformed into the mind of Christ. And even when God gets us through it *time after time after time—the next obstacle comes, and we forget what He's already done.*

- **<u>God's Faithfulness, Our Forgetfulness</u>**
  - We are not alone in the struggle. All over Scripture, God's people faced the same dilemma. The same fears, the same insecurities, the same *astonishing level* of forgetfulness! The children of Israel, after God moved in *miraculous ways* to rescue them from Egypt, still struggled to trust that God was going to provide. They had just *walked through* the Red Sea, they had just *seen His glory* on Mt. Sinai. No sooner did they get walking on way to the Promised Land that they began to *complain*: *Did God take us out here to die? At least in Egypt we got 3 square meals!* As if He who parted the sea was unable to feed His own people! But God kept showing up: the Water from the rock, the quail, the mana—*daily*

bread. He took them all the way to the edge of the Promised Land—and *still* they didn't trust Him. So, the Lord decided to send them back into that classroom a little longer, to wander the wilderness 40 more years. And He kept providing *every single step*. When the next generation was finally ready to enter the Land, Moses reminded them how God provided, so they'd trust Him in new territory: ***"Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with mana, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live by bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years."*** **(8:2-4)** God kept showing up, kept providing, His people kept forgetting. So, He humbled them, allowed them to hunger, *so He could feed them*, so they'd know *God is enough.*

- You'd think we would figure it out, but the pattern continues, because humans are humans. Even when Jesus comes on the scene, *His disciples do the very same things*. You've probably heard the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000—amazing God sighting, what a sign! But did you hear about the feeding of *the 4,000?* I'm serious: in both Matthew and Mark, you have one story where He miraculously feeds 5,000 and just a chapter later, *He does it again with 4,000!* There are lots of interesting reasons for this repeat—for one thing, the first miracle is with a Jewish community, the next is in a Gentile region—so it's showing us Jesus not only the Savior of the Jews, but the whole world. But I want to highlight the disciples' reaction to all of this. In the first story, the disciples come to Jesus saying, *we should send this crowd home—this is a remote place and they have nothing to eat.* Jesus says, *we don't have to send them home. You give them something to eat!* They're like, *we have a couple loaves of bread and fish.* Jesus says, *bring them to me*—they place the little bit the have *in His hands*, then He makes them participate in the miracle—they pass it out, and it multiplies to feed the entire crowd with leftovers to spare! Now, fast-forward *1 chapter*. They're in a

new place, another big crowd, this time more Gentiles. And they're in the same predicament: these people are so crazy about Jesus they've been in this remote place *3 days* and they don't have food. Now *Jesus* highlights the need to the disciples. And do you know what the disciples' response is? ***"Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?"*** **(Matt. 15:33)** *You just saw Him feed 5,000. You just saw Him walk on water. You really don't know where to get the bread?! HE'S STANDING RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU!* So, Jesus does the exact same thing, again. And it leads them into a conversation in the next chapter where Jesus has to say to them, ***"Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered?"*** **(16:9-10)** And it culminates in this moment where Jesus asks them, ***"Who do you say I am?"*** **(16:15)** *Do you know who I Am?*

- **<u>God Sightings, Our Sight</u>**
  - We do the same thing. We do. We can be just as slow to trust, just as quick to forget. God brings us through one obstacle, wins the battle, shows us His heart. *God shows up!* We rejoice, breathe a sigh of relief, then, *the next obstacle comes.* And we want our default to be *faith* over fear, *trust* over doubt, *peace* over strife! But sometimes, the storm is just so loud, the need is just so big, *and we're tempted to freak out as if God hasn't already led us through the wilderness and met our needs 1,000 times before.* This mindset of *fear* and *scarcity*, this worry that we're *on our own* is just *so ingrained* in our fallen nature. We need new hearts, new minds.
    - When it comes to our lives and our struggles, the Devil wants nothing more than our mindset to be stuck in defeat, despair, anxiousness, apathy. He wants to *obscure our sight of God* with the cares and lusts of life, so we can't even *see* a God Sighting right in front of us. This is what Jesus meant when he said some hearts are so full of the cares of life, those thorns and thistles, God's Word can't grow in them. But the Lord wants to give us a mindset based on the abundance of His Kingdom and righteousness. He wants to

replace despair with dependence, fear with faith, scarcity with abundance, defeat with possibility. And so, even after He's rescued us and claimed us as His own, He will allow us to face challenges, struggles, tests, because He has more to teach us. Hebrews says, ***"Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?...They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."*** **(12:7-10)**

- Sometimes, it feels like *one setback after another*. You want to shout, *God, can't we just make this easy for once, why does it have to be so hard?* But God loves us more than that, His plans are bigger than that. He's shown us more than enough to know *He is faithful.* The next time you're overwhelmed by the need, the feeling of "never enough," close your eyes and picture the expression on Jesus face when He was multiplying those loaves and fish. Picture Jesus looking into your eyes in that moment, asking you: *Do you know who I Am?* And remember: *God will show up, God will provide, God is enough.* He sealed that promise with His own blood.