

Living Easier

“The Fish are Jumpin’ & The Cotton is High”

I. SCRIPTURE

Matthew 11:28-30 – “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

II. OUR CURRENT SITUATION

Over the last few weeks, our local congregation has had a pretty difficult time. Many were sick and in pain. Due to the global Coronavirus pandemic, our community, our country; our worldwide Messianic body, and the entire world body have also experienced very difficult times: with sickness and death, with stay-at-home orders, church closures, loss of jobs, loss of income, depletion of personal savings, and much more, including many starting to experience hunger due to the mandated “lockdowns”. I was watching the news last night, where they were showing pictures of over 6,000 cars that were lined up to receive food from a food bank in San Antonio, Texas. About this, DailyMail.com reported:

“Six THOUSAND families line up in their cars for hours at a food bank in San Antonio as millions across the country turn to charity organizations to keep from going hungry during the coronavirus lockdown.

- **The San Antonio Food Bank distributed one million pounds of food to roughly 6,000 families on Thursday (April 9, 2020)**
- **Aerial photos show thousands of cars lined up at Trader's Village for the massive food distribution event**
- **Each family left with enough food to fill two grocery carts, intended to last them the rest of the month**
- **'The need is that great,' San Antonio Food Bank President and CEO Eric Cooper said of the huge turnout**
- **'We are moving through food so fast, this is our second big distribution this week, but there are hundreds of distributions that are going on all the time,' he added**

The official that was being interviewed by Fox News last night reported on “The Story” program, that these lines were similar to what was also happening now at the 200 other food banks across the US. I was very surprised by this news, because my wife Hydie and I had just previously expressed our thankfulness – in a “praising YAHUAH [God] for our blessings” reflection – that during this difficult time she still has continued employment as a health care worker and I’m still able to work in an essential “accounting and finance” organization, where our family income is still stable. We were and continue to praise YAHUAH [God]!

During this time, I have also been reflecting on others within our local and worldwide body in MESSIAH [Christ]. In our local regular body, I am aware of not one who is experiencing a financial hardship, at least to the extent that their family’s food supply or other necessities are being hindered, despite some obvious shortages of essential items on the shelves of the local stores. Every “worker” in our regular local body is still working, as far as I know, because they are all “essential” to the organizations with whom they are employed. Others, who collect retirement income, are also not hindered, as far as I know. And because our local body has had enough during this time, I am very proud to observe that many individuals within our body have and continue to offer help to others during this time, who need food, supplies, or other support.

In our wider worldwide body, specifically in Pakistan with some support from our local congregation, the church there has been distributing food to the home-bound community. We showed photos of this outreach earlier.

I don’t mean to say that it has been “easy” for our local body, because it hasn’t, because a majority are still going through a healing process after suffering sickness and pain over the last few weeks. And, I don’t mean to say that it has been “easy” for our worldwide body either, as they are *still* experiencing “lock-downs” and church closures, and all the related consequences. But I believe... because 100% of our local congregation participated just this week in a meditative, introspective way, in the YASHUA’s Supper on Wednesday (aka “The LORD’s Supper” or “Passover”). (Thank you dear YAHUAH [God] for answering my prayer on this with the 100% participation, of your local believers who came out of despite their fear and apprehensions; thank you dear YAHUAH [God] for giving us the insight in how to do this safely.) For what this means for us now, is that as promised through YAHUAH [God]’s Word, we again will possess: “Good Health”, “Strength”, and “Extended Life”... if we each did “examine ourselves before we ate and drank of YAHUAH [The LORD] body” (I Corinthians 11:28-31).

III. "SUMMERTIME AND THE LIVING IS EASY"

And so now, based on what I have just mentioned, I hope you will not laugh at me for what I have been recently reflecting on: the words of a tune of a play that I once witnessed in London... entitled "Summertime". It was written by George Gershwin, and the words go something like this...

"Summertime
And the livin' is easy
Fish are jumpin'
And the cotton is high.

Oh, your daddy's rich
And your ma is good lookin'
So hush, little baby
Don't you cry...

One of these mornings
You're going to rise up singing
Then you'll spread your wings
And you'll take the sky
But 'til that morning
There's a'nothing can harm you
With daddy and mammy standing by."

Today, these words remind me of something... that you and I are about to exit his Spring season, and enter into Summertime... when the Living will be easier... where our sickness, where this Coronavirus, where our self-imposed home imprisonment, and all the related consequences of these will subside... when we will again experience "Summertime", where "the living is eas[ier], [and] the fish are jumpin' and the cotton is high". And why do I believe this will happen for our body in MESSIAH [Christ]? It's because... in case you don't remember... "[your] daddy's rich"! In fact, he's the richest guy, not only in the world, but in the multiverse! And... He has given to you... as He has given to me... very specific personal guarantees, if we will only believe in, and yoke ourselves to Him.

"Come to Me", He says. For **"you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden light"**. For in Me, the "Fish are jumpin' and the cotton is high". "And what do I mean by saying this? "Well, He asks, "did you forget my promise to you, when I said, when I promised you..."

IV. THE 'FISH ARE JUMPIN' AND THE COTTON IS HIGH"

"... Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. [For] life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and YAH [God] feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then YAH [God] so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of YAHUAH [God], and all these things shall be added to you." (Matthew 12:22-31)

So yes, brothers and sisters in MESSIAH [Christ]. In Him, the "fish are [truly] jumpin'...and the cotton is [truly] high"... if we will [continue to] "seek *first* the kingdom of YAHUAH [God] and His righteousness"! (Matthew 6:33). What this means, dear friends, is that if each day when we wake up (which is by the way is a blessing in and of itself).. that if each day before we slip on the "cotton" that He has provided us, and before we eat the "fish" that He has also provided us... if we will first slip ourselves into His yoke and commit to Him... to learning from Him throughout each day, He promises us "rest" in Him, and of our days ahead, that... they will be "easy" and your burdens.. well, they will be His burdens, and they will be light enough to carry. Thank you YASHUAH [Jesus]! Thank you!

V. "FORGET NOT ALL HIS BENEFITS"

And Brothers and Sisters, if the food and clothing promise were not enough for you, then please also ponder your Daddy's promise to you through the Psalmist. In reflection of what we have just gone through, and some still going through, let us now praise His name now, as we recall His added words of promise...

**"¹ Bless YAHUAH [the LORD], O my soul;
And all that is within me, bless His holy name!
² Bless YAHUAH [the LORD], O my soul,
And forget not all His benefits:**

- ³ Who forgives all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases,**
- ⁴ Who redeems your life from destruction,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,**
- ⁵ Who satisfies your mouth with good things,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.**
- ⁶ YAHUAH [the LORD] executes righteousness
And justice for all who are oppressed.**
- ⁷ He made known His ways to Moses,
His acts to the children of Israel.**
- ⁸ YAHUAH [the LORD] is merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.**
- ⁹ He will not always strive with us,
Nor will He keep His anger forever.**
- ¹⁰ He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor punished us according to our iniquities.**
- ¹¹ For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;**
- ¹² As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.**
- ¹³ As a father pities his children,
So YAHUAH [the LORD] pities those who fear Him.**
- ¹⁴ For He knows our frame;
He remembers that we are dust.**
- ¹⁵ As for man, his days are like grass;
As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.**
- ¹⁶ For the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
And its place remembers it no more.**
- ¹⁷ But the mercy of YAHUAH [the LORD] is from everlasting to everlasting
On those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children,**
- ¹⁸ To such as keep His covenant,
And to those who remember His commandments to do them."**

(Psalm 103:1-18)

VI. SHARING OUR WEALTH IN MESSIAH [Christ] WITH OTHERS

Would it surprise you to know that immediately after YAHUSHA [Jesus]'s words of promise to us of food and clothing from Matthew 12:22-31, that these words follow:

“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”? (Matthew 12:32-34)

If we are to give “alms”, I want to be sure what the meaning of “alms” is, don’t you? I looked up the meaning of the word this morning just to know the meaning for sure. According to Bing, it means that we are told by YAHUSHA [Jesus] to give our “money or food to poor people”. And why should we do that? Or maybe a better question is “why shouldn’t we do that?” With our bountiful “fish” and “cotton” promise, and considering that our life is as a flower that is now “flourishing”, but will soon be gone ... why shouldn’t we share our temporary earthly wealth with others? If our ultimate inheritance is not of this world, but of the eternal Kingdom to come... let’s give our money *and* food to those in need now, while it’s still possible! For in doing this, we are told that we will have **“money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys”!** And meanwhile, YAHUAH [God]’s food and clothing promise to us still remains in force.

Do you remember the story of how Elijah who, after he fled to the wilderness, was fed bread and meat morning and night by the Ravens and was also hydrated by the Cherith Brook? Or, do you remember that soon afterward, when Elijah left the brook for Zarephath due to the famine, that he asked for food from the poor widow? Who told him, “I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die”? (I Kings 17:12) Do you remember what she did? She gave not only her last meal, but her dependent son’s last meal as well to Elijah IN FAITH, as YAHUAH [God] promised her: **“the bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day YAHUAH [the LORD] sends rain on the earth”.** And as it went, “the bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of YAHUAH which He spoke by Elijah” (I Kings 17:14, 16)

Yes, dear friends in MESSIAH [Christ], IN FAITH... during this time when others have more need than we have, let's share our alms with others in our community... let's also share our alms with others in our global communities: in Pakistan, in Haiti, in Kenya, in the Philippines, and now for the first time, in Bangladesh. (Yes, dear Pastor Samiran, if you happen to see today's message, your prayers after many years to have a donor through GFAN finally came true this week.)

Dear brothers and sisters in YAHUSHA [Jesus], IN FAITH... let's pray that our giving is just a start of what we can and will do in YAHUSHA [Jesus]... in fact, let's try to out give our rich Daddy. For if you and I agree to do that, then as the Gershwin song goes, as we are promised, "one of these mornings you [and I] 're going to rise up singing..." and you and I one day will "spread [our] wings and [we'll] take the sky... but 'til that morning, there's a'nothing can harm you with [our] daddy .. standing by".

VII. CONCLUSION

Let's close today with YAHUAH [the LORD]'s prayer. I pray that today that you pay particular attention to our demand for daily bread from our Daddy, Who remembers before we even ask, that He has already promised it to us.

Our [dear] Father Who art in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

Thy kingdom come; thy will be done
On earth as it is [done] in heaven.

Give us day by day our daily bread (and "thank you" dear Father for your faithful promises to us).

And forgive us our sins,
for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one."

Thank you again, dearest Father.

Thank you again dear YAHUSHA [Jesus], Whom we especially remember today... while you were in the tomb, and during this "Holy" week, where we remember

that you lived, that you suffered, that you died, and that you arose again so that we might also an easier life, a life abundant in You.

And, thank you again dear RUACH HA'QODESH [Holy Spirit], Who faithfully delivers our prayers, to our Daddy in heaven, in words so polished, words so expressive... that express our feelings in such a way that we could never even imagine... presented to Him as a beautiful fragrance before His righteous throne.

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Amen.

Credits:

“Six THOUSAND families line up...”, Megan Sheets, April 10, 2020, DailyMail.com;
<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8207245/Six-THOUSAND-families-line-cars-hours-food-bank-San-Antonio.html>