



## August 5, 2018 - Spiritual Communion Given by Rev. Mattei

The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.  
(Ex 16:2)

"When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people."  
(Ephesians 4:9)

"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35)

The Israelites' [complaining](#), [grumbling](#) or [murmuring](#) in the desert is widely reported as well as their cravings and rebelliousness ([Psalm 106](#)). The Israelites were at first very eager to leave the hardship of slavery behind and embrace the promise of a [land flowing with milk and honey](#). But when the going got challenging and exhausting and required concerted focus on the long term vision the people faltered. They started complaining and pointing accusatory fingers at Moses and ultimately at God ([Ex 16:4-8](#)).

The people of Israel panicked in the absence of real food and entered survival mode. They soon forgot their past experience of a liberating God, of Yahweh, who had taken on their [cry and witnessed their suffering](#). Their trust in Yahweh was not readily accessible and the vision of the promised land was not an immediate reality. The reptilian part of the brain, the amygdala, where the fight or flight reaction originates, had taken over and they engaged in that common "shoot first, ask questions later" phenomenon. The Israelites were so in fear for their lives that they had forgotten [Who](#) it was that wanted to build them into His [people](#) by teaching them the [fear of the Lord](#).

Complaining and grumbling was not limited to the people of Israel, though. Writing to the church in Ephesus, the author wanted to address the behavioral issue of division and self-interest by reminding them of the theological vision of [unity](#) to which they were all called. When in distress we forget our vision and ultimate goal, and need a prophetic companion or mentor in our midst to remind us of our calling, values and [personal responsibility](#) within the body of believers. We may thus be reminded that the gifts we have been endowed with are the [ligaments](#) that keep the body together and functional. They enable the whole community (not just an individual) to reach the unity and full [maturity of Christ](#) desired for us by God. That is the Christian vision and goal.

However, no gifts may produce the desired result unless imbued with grace and immersed in the example of Christ who has descended among us to show us a way of humility and compassion before [ascending](#) to the Father, according to Psalm 68, which the author quotes. In other words, lowering ourselves, listening, speaking truth in love and seeking to maintain unity especially with the ones we have disagreements may aid us in our mutual understanding and in

growing to full maturity. We may find strength and guidance when we sit still in prayer and meditation on the teachings, attitudes and lifestyle of Jesus.

This is the hope of God for us: that we may desire to feed on the eternal bread of our [communion with God](#) and not on self-serving spirituality. Even in our spiritual life we seem to be motivated by self-interests. Even with the best of intentions, we still approach God with the unspoken question: What's in it for me? And Jesus lets us know what we need to look for: not a simple miracle for the day but life eternal with him, removing our focus from our immediate need to Him, the source and ground of our very life.