

Dream Big: Cloudy with a Chance of Quail **January 13, 2013**

Have you ever done something foolish? Of course you have. We've all done something that when we thought about it later, we thought, wasn't that foolish. Maybe you've done something that you didn't think was foolish, but others did. Drawing prayer circles often looks like an exercise in foolishness. But that's faith. Faith is the willingness to look foolish. Noah looked foolish building a boat in the middle of a desert. The Israelite army looked foolish marching around Jericho blowing trumpets. A shepherd boy named David looked foolish charging a giant with a slingshot. The wise men looked foolish tracking a star to Timbuktu. Peter looked foolish getting out of a boat in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. And Jesus looked foolish wearing a crown of thorns. But the results speak for themselves. Noah was saved from the flood; the walls came tumbling down; David defeated Goliath; the wise men discovered the Messiah; Peter walked on water; and Jesus was crowned the King of Kings.

Drawing prayer circles often feels foolish. Before the first raindrop fell, Honi had to feel a little foolish. Standing inside a circle and demanding rain is a risky proposition. Vowing that you won't leave the circle until it rains is even riskier. Honi didn't draw a semi-circle. He drew a complete circle. There was no escape clause, no expiration date. Honi backed himself into a circle, and the only way out was a miracle.

The bigger the circle you draw, the more foolish you'll feel. But if you aren't willing to step out of the boat, you'll never walk on water. If you aren't willing to circle the city, the wall will never fall. And if you aren't willing to follow the star, you'll miss out on the greatest adventure of your life. In order to experience a miracle, you have to take a risk. And one of the most difficult types of risk to take is risking your reputation. Honi already had a reputation as a rainmaker, but he was willing to risk his reputation by praying for rain one more time. Honi took the risk and the rest is history.

Moses had learned this lesson well: if you don't take the risk, you forfeit the miracle. After 400 years of slavery, God delivers the Israelites out of Egypt. But it's much harder getting "Egypt out of the Israelites" than getting "the Israelites out of Egypt." Despite the memories of slavery and miracles of deliverance, the Israelites want to go back to Egypt. This is where we find the Israelites and Moses in Numbers 11.

The people of Israel begin to complain (shocking...I know). After being given manna for food, they want more! **Numbers 11:4-6, "Oh, for some meat!" they exclaimed. "We remember all the fish we ate used to eat for free in Egypt. And we had all the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic that we wanted. But now our appetites are gone, and day after day we have nothing to eat but this manna!"**

But talk about selective memory! The Israelites longingly remember the free fish they ate in Egypt, and forget the little fact that the food was free because they weren't. The Israelites weren't just slaves, they had been the victims of genocide. Yet they missed the meat on the menu? And isn't it just a little ironic that the Israelites were complaining about one miracle while asking for another one? Their capacity for complaining was simply astounding, and we scoff at the Israelites for grumbling about a meal of manna that was miraculously delivered to their doorsteps every day, but don't we do the same thing?

Despite their incessant complaining, God patiently responds to their food tantrum with one of the most unfathomable promises in Scripture. He doesn't just promise a one-course meal of

meat, **“The LORD heard you when you wailed, ‘If only we had meat to eat! We were better off in Egypt!’ Now the LORD will give you meat, and you will eat it. ¹⁹ You will not eat it for just one day, or two days, or five, ten or twenty days, ²⁰ but for a whole month,”** (vv. 18b-20a). God promises meat for a month. And Moses can hardly believe it. Literally.

He replies, **“Here I am among six hundred thousand men on foot and you say, ‘I will give you meat to eat for a whole month!’ Would they have enough if flocks and herds were slaughtered for them? Would they have enough if all the fish in the sea were caught for them?”** (vv. 21-22).

Moses is doing the math in his mind and it doesn't add up. Not even close! He is trying to think of any conceivable way that God could fulfill this promise and he can't think of a single scenario. He doesn't see how God can fulfill His impossible promise for a day, let alone a month.

I remember when I realized I was serving God in ways He wasn't calling me to serve him. I had a full-time job and a great church, and without a backup plan and knowing my wife and I were undergoing efforts to conceive children, I told the leadership that I needed to go. I needed to go serve God in ways he had called me to serve. I didn't know where I would go, but I had to move on.

Have you ever been there? You know God wants you to take the job that pays less, but it doesn't add up. You know God wants you to go on the mission trip, but it doesn't add up. You know God wants you get married, go to grad school, or adopt, but it doesn't add up.

What is the “step of faith” that you need to take in pursuing your big dream? If you put what little you have in your hand into the hand of God, it won't just add up. God will make it multiply just as Jesus was able to make 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish multiply to feed 5000 people. That is the “step of faith” that you need to take in pursuing your big dream?

The Israelites complained, “We want meat.” God answered with Quailmeggedon as Mark Batterson describes it. Quailmeggedon happened just as God told Moses, **“Now a wind went out from the LORD and drove quail in from the sea. It scattered them to up to two cubits deep all around the camp, as far as a day's walk in any direction. All that day and night and all the next day the people went out and gathered quail. No one gathered less than ten homers,”** (Numbers 11:31-32). A homer equated to roughly 200 liters, and assuming that the quail were of an average size, it rained somewhere in the neighborhood of 105 million quail. But that isn't even the whole of the miracle!

The Israelites were parked in the wilderness of Paran, a region about fifty miles inland from the Mediterranean Sea and fifty miles southwest of the Dead Sea. The significance of that is this: quail tend to live by the water and they don't fly long distances. If it weren't for a supernatural west wind, they would have never made it this far inland. So this is a meteorological miracle. And it's not just a miraculous west wind. The clouds burst and rained quail from the sky.

Not only did they come much farther inland than they were supposed to, but they filled up a huge area of land. We're talking about an area that was almost 700 square miles. To put that into perspective, Washington, DC is 68.3 square miles. Not only is that an area that is ten times larger than the nation's capital, the quail were piled three feet deep. Can you imagine seeing that many birds fly into the camp? It was a like a bird blizzard. Quailmeggedon. The cloud of birds was so massive that it seemed like a solar eclipse.

Moses could have never anticipated this answer to prayer. It was unpredictable and unprecedented, but Moses had the guts to circle the promise anyway! And when you circle the promise, you never know how God will provide, but it's always cloudy with a chance of quail. Is there a promise you need to circle? Maybe you need to circle a promise for your marriage or your children. Maybe you need to circle a promise for this stage of life. Maybe you need to circle a promise for a fear you are facing or a dream you are pursuing.

Before the quailstorm appeared on Doppler radar, God asks Moses a question. A few moments ago, we heard Moses question how all that meat would be possible. God answered with a question. It's more than a question. It's the question. Your answer to this question, the question, will determine the size of your prayer circles, "**Is the Lord's arm too short?**" (vv. 23). I do believe that could be considered one of the first snarky comments in recorded history.

The obvious answer to that question is no. God is perfect and omnipotent, which means by definition, there is nothing God cannot do. Yet many of us pray as if our problems are bigger than God. So let me remind you of this truth that should fuel your faith: God is infinitely bigger than your biggest problem or biggest dream. And while we're on the topic, His grace is infinitely bigger than your biggest sin.

The modern mystic, A. W. Tozer, believed that a low view of God is the cause of a hundred lesser evils, but a high view of God is the solution to ten thousand temporal problems. If that's true, then maybe our biggest problems aren't an impending divorce or failing business or doctor's diagnosis. I'm not making light of or minimizing your relational or financial or health issues or overwhelming challenges you might be facing. But perhaps we need to regain a godly perspective on our problems by considering this question: **are our problems bigger than God or is God bigger than our problems?** Our biggest problem is our small view of God. That is the cause of all lesser evils. And it's a high view of God that is the solution to all other problems.

God is really asking Moses, "**Is there any limit to my power?**" Have you answered the question? There are only two options: yes or no. Until you come to the conviction that God's grace and power know no limits, you will draw small prayer circles. Once you embrace the omnipotence of God, you'll draw ever-enlarging circles around your God-given, God-sized dreams.

There's a story of a man who was sizing up God by asking, "God, how long is a million years to you?" God said, "A million years is like a second." Then the man asked, "How much is a million dollars to you?" God said, "A million dollars is like a penny." The man smiled and said, "Could you spare a penny?" God smiled back and said, "Sure, just wait a second."

Moses was perplexed by the promise God had given him. How could God possibly provide meat for a month? It didn't add up! But at that critical juncture, when Moses had to decide whether or not to circle the promise, God posed the question.

The size of prayers depends on the size of our God. And if God knows no limits, then neither should our prayers. With God, there is no big or small, easy or difficult, possible or impossible. That is difficult for us to comprehend because all we've ever known are the four dimensions we were born into, but God is not subject to the natural laws He instituted. He has no beginning and no end. To the infinite, all finites are equal. Even our hardest prayers are easy for the Omnipotent One to answer because there is no degree of difficulty.

If you're like me, you tend to use bigger words for bigger requests. You pull out your best vocabulary words for your biggest prayers as if God's answer depends upon the correct combination of words. Trust me, it doesn't matter how long or how loud you pray. It comes down to your answer to the question. Is there any limit to my power?

When God gives a vision, He makes provision. We just need the courage to step out in faith when God is calling us to get out of the boat. Otherwise we'll forfeit the miracle. We have to believe that God owns the cattle on a thousand hills. He can send a west wind that brings 105 million quail into the camp. But we need to do our part and our part is taking a step of faith in pursuing the dream God has put in our hearts.

So what step of faith do you need to take? What decision do you need to make? On what promise do you need to put down a stake and draw a circle?