

INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
August 2, 2015
10th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Acts 24:22-26, Matthew 14:22-34
Hymns: 239; 427; 526; 644 (798:1,2,4)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Exodus 17:1-7

Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink. 2 Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, "Give us water, that we may drink."

So Moses said to them, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the Lord?"

3 And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, "Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"

4 So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!"

5 And the Lord said to Moses, "Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink."

And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?" (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God my Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Facing challenges in life.

It comes in every life. In one way or another we will face the challenge of wondering how we are going to make it through the next week. Sometimes we might even be concerned about how we will make it through the next day, or the next hour.

Some might suggest we have gone soft as a people, as a nation. I know that my parents grew up facing difficult days. In those days every penny counted. That was a time when, for a good number of years, they truly understood the fourth petition of Lord's Prayer, **"Give us this day our daily bread."** Yes, there have been times when I struggled paying the monthly bills. There was a time when the meal choices were oatmeal or mac and cheese, or maybe a peanut butter sandwich. Those weren't as severe of tests as others faced before me. My parents saw life differently because of the tests they endured in their lives. They also understood the importance of the Lord's presence in their lives; they understood the reality of God's faithfulness, and how His love, His grace, His strength would bear them up and see them through the evil day.

We all need to learn that lesson. The Holy Spirit calls us to faith in the Lord as our God and Savior. Yet our flesh cringes, our spirits doubt when the Lord allows those tests to enter our lives that reveal the reality of God's grace and power in our lives.

It was a real test faced by the Children of Israel as they began what would become forty long years of nomadic existence in the wilderness. This incident should have taught them a vitally important lesson about trust for that pilgrimage to the Promised Land.

THEME: Water from the Rock Reveals God's Power to Save.

The journey in and of itself was difficult. This wasn't a camping trip. It was a journey with the whole family from the elderly all the way down to new born babes, going together, most on foot, with

the few possessions you could carry, and guiding any and all of your animals along the way. Many of the people had flocks of sheep and others had cattle. These all had to be tended to. In the best conditions there was going to be a great deal of competition for water. The whole group numbered in the many hundreds of thousands. I guess it doesn't seem all that strange that the

I. People were Chaffing Under the Trials of Life.

But then things got worse. Camp was to be made in the wilderness near Horeb and there was no water. There was no water for bathing. There was no water for cooking or to drink to quench one's thirst. There was no water for all the animals. There was NO WATER for the people to drink! This was not laughing matter! What was going to be done? The people were demanding not only answers, but a successful resolution of this matter. Then things got ugly!

Exodus 17: 2-4 Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, "Give us water, that we may drink." So Moses said to them, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the Lord?" 3 And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, "Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" 4 So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!"

The complaining by the Children of Israel took an especially nasty and sinful twist when they accused God of bringing them out into the wilderness so they might perish from thirst. They were looking at the great deliverance which God had worked in freeing them from the cruel slavery and bondage in Egypt and twisting it into some kind of cruel trick. This was more than worry about how they were going to care for family and livestock. They were accusing God of negligence, even cruelty in failing to properly care for them.

Without doubt they were trying God's patience. God could have turned away from them and left them to their own resources. He could have seen them as a bunch of ingrates who didn't deserve

any kindness from Him at all. And that would have been true and that would have been just.

That is the way people are. That is the way we are also. God has delivered us from a cruel slavery to sin and death. He has worked a great salvation at great personal cost to Himself. He gave His own Son into death to redeem us from bondage. We only benefit from this wonder of grace because God has called us to faith through the gospel. The whole plan from beginning to end was and continues to be a work of God for our salvation. But then a little bump comes along in the road of life. Life is like driving in the mall parking lot with all those pot holes. You know you are going to hit one. It's inevitable, but we fell into the largest pot hole, and to us it seems to be such a massive hole we think we can't get out!

Trouble comes that we can't handle on our own. It happens to us all. The trouble is bigger for than it is for God. It might be any of a different number of trials. We have seen enough trouble among the members of our own little congregation in the past couple of years. Loved ones fall sick, and then they can't work. Recovery is long and slow in coming. There have been some deaths of loved ones. Our flesh protests that this isn't fair. At that point the devil would do his best to make it ugly among us also. In our weakness we may start to question God's love, or His kindness, or His ability to deliver us from the distressing problems of life. God could be offended. He could say, "If that's the way you think I am, then so be it, I will leave you on your own and see how you like that!"

But that is not the way of the Lord. What do we see from Him? We see --

II. God Delivering with Power and Grace.

Yes, even when Moses was fed up with the people, and perhaps a little afraid of what they might do, God delivers. He told Moses to take the staff, the one with which he had struck the Nile River and turned it into blood, and strike this large rock that was to be found in that place. Moses did as the Lord commanded and God worked a mighty miracle with water pouring forth from the rock. Water was there for all their needs from a rock.

There are important lessons for us to be learned from this biblical account, lessons about how God approaches situations differently than men do. God does deliver, but in His own time and in His own way. God is mighty to save, just as we are taught time and again in Holy Scripture. We are taught in

Hebrews 13:5 “God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’”

Again we are told in

Psalms 46:1-2 “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.”

His promises are right there for us in His Word, but it’s like we don’t really get it until we are challenged, until our faith is challenged. Then we learn of the faithfulness of our God who is mighty to save us, even when we don’t deserve it, (and we never do deserve it, it is always grace!)

The result is the same as it was for the people of Israel. They learned a lesson about their God. And they learned about –

III. Trusting the Lord; Knowing His Faithfulness.

This is a lesson that comes by faith. So it is a work of the Holy Spirit. Trusting God doesn’t begin with seeing God’s faithfulness in caring for us in times of temporal trouble. It begins with understanding the greater deliverance which God has worked for us in Christ. It is that faith in Jesus as our Redeemer, with all that encompasses, that lays the foundation for a trust in God in all things. We need to know and believe that Jesus is the Christ the eternal Son of God who came down to earth to take upon Himself our human nature. As our flesh and blood brother, He faced life with all the same challenges we face, with all the temptations we endure. Jesus fulfilled the law of God for us. He lived that perfect life we cannot live, and yet He died because of the guilt of sin. It was our sin, our guilt, our curse, that He bore to the cross of Calvary. There He suffered, and there He died, all in our place, so that God would count His death as the death sentence paid in full

for us all. Jesus rose again the third day and lives forevermore as our Lord, as Protector.

That is our foundation for trust in all the regular daily disasters we face in life. It is an argument from the greater to the lesser. Since God took care of our biggest problem, He will take care of our smaller ones as well. Paul wrote in

Romans 8:31-32 “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”

The Lord has not only delivered us from sin and death, He understands our struggles in life. Of this we can be confident not only because He is the omniscient God who knows all things, but also because Jesus walked on this earth, and that we can comprehend. He felt pain, disappointment, grief and sadness. He was hungry, thirsty, in need. He accepted help from others. He more than walked a mile in our shoes. And now He who is our Brother is in heaven above where He has all power and authority to help us in our need.

All this is in demonstration of God’s love and care for you. He who didn’t spare His own Son to save you, won’t He keep His word, and help you in your hour of need? Of course He will! God is faithful. And so the Spirit builds this trust in our hearts through this gospel even as we learn of God’s faithfulness through life’s trials.

Cast all your cares upon Him for He cares for you (1 Peter 5:7).

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5).

**“Trust in the Lord forever,
For in YAH the Lord, is everlasting strength”** (Isaiah 26:4).

TLH 437:1 “Who trusts in God a strong abode In heav’n and earth possesses. Who looks in love to Christ above, No fear his heart oppresses. In Thee, alone, dear Lord, we own Sweet hope

and consolation, Our Shield from foes, our Balm for woes, Our great and sure Salvation.”

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.