



September 27, 2020

Introduction

Invitation

Call to Worship:

As deer long for flowing streams, our souls long for God. Our souls thirst for the living God. When we gather together to praise and give thanks, we can experience the presence of God and be filled with the water of life. Let us worship together!

Hymn: "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing"

Reading the Word: Exodus 17:1-7

Message: "Complaints"

Rev. Deb Hanson

Prayer:

Life-giving God, you provide us with ways to fill our cups so that our need to quench our spiritual thirst is satisfied. Yet, there are times when we so easily forget to return to your well of love, grace, and mercy to receive that water of life. When we turn another direction or wander away, we can't always figure out why something is missing, or why we are out of balance in our spiritual lives. Bring us again and again to the waters that fill us so that we can, in turn, be your ministers in this world, offering your water of life to others. Thank you for loving us and sticking with us even when we stray. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Hymn: "Fill My Cup, Lord"

Blessing

Exodus 17:1-7

From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. The people quarreled with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?" But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with Thirst?" So Moses cried out to the Lord, "What shall I do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me." The Lord said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. He called the place Massah and Mariah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"



**SERMON TRANSCRIPT
GIVEN BY
Rev. Dr. Deb Hanson**

Message “Complaints” Rev. Dr. Debra Hanson

Over the past few weeks, we have considered the journey of the Israelites as they gradually moved toward the Promised Land. We have discovered that, as former slaves, they still had a lot to learn. They were not able to fend for themselves in the vast wilderness, so their leader Moses stayed in constant communication with God in order to meet their needs and answer their complaints.

The thing is, Moses wasn't nearly as patient as God. Over the short time since the tribes of Israel had set foot on the other side of the Red Sea, they had complained about something regularly. First, they complained because the Egyptian army was pursuing them as they reached the other side of the Sea. God, through Moses, saved them from being captured.

Then, they complained because the water was bitter, so Moses turned to God, who told him to throw a piece of wood into the water, which then became drinkable. When the food began to run out, Moses again asked God for help, and the people received manna and quail.

In today's lesson from Exodus 17, we find them complaining about water again. This time, they have not been able to find water, so they accuse Moses of setting them up to die in the wilderness. Moses turned to God for help, and God provided with enough water to quench everyone's thirst.

To be fair, it is important to remember that these tribes had lived predictable, organized lives under Egyptian rule. They really didn't know what to do in the arid, hot wilderness where dehydration could take their lives so quickly. Anyone who has experienced great thirst understands the need for water to sustain them.

In 1998, I was fortunate to go on a trip to Israel, and the regular reminder was to drink lots of water. Bottled water was sold on the streets for one American dollar, and we bought it whenever we could. On the day that we went to the Qumran Caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls had been found, we discovered that it was a very dry, hot, and unprotected place in the middle of the desert. My water had run out, and I began to feel light headed and sick. Someone, fortunately, had an extra bottle of water that they shared with me, prompting our guide to remind us again to have plenty of water with us.

The tribes of Israel were traveling through the desert wilderness in large numbers, so we can only imagine the amount of water needed. It's challenging enough to go without water for a while, but the need for water intensifies with moving and staying under the hot sun for hours on end as they carried their tents, supplies, children, and livestock with them. No wonder they were afraid of dying in the wilderness!

Yet, God still provided for them. The complaining that seemed so annoying to Moses pushed him to appeal to God, and God provided. Time and time again, they were reminded that they could trust God to be with them even in the challenges of their journey.

There are times in our lives when we feel that same wondering, that same doubt. God says, “I will be with you” but then it feels like we are alone, abandoned, and left to fend for ourselves. We may not have a Moses to intercede for us, but we do have the scriptures, prayer, and others who travel with us on the journey. Maybe our prayers aren’t answered the way we expect them to be, or maybe the results don’t come as fast as we think they should. But the promise of God is that our prayers will be answered.

By tuning our hearts and minds toward God, trusting in the work of the Spirit and learning from Jesus, we can persevere to find answers and recognize that God is at work in our lives.

We have a need to know that God is there, so we repeatedly ask, maybe even complain about God’s slowness in answering our prayers. We might ask, as the Israelites did, “Is God among us or not?” We might ask repeatedly for God to help us in our lives: in a troubled marriage, after a devastating diagnosis, as our paychecks become smaller, following an untimely death, about war, natural disasters, feeling spiritually dry, or any number of life’s situations that bring fear, loss, worry, or a need for reassurance.

When we ask if God is among us, we are asking for the love and grace of God to touch our lives. We keep asking, and then wait, watch, and remain open to God’s response, to God’s assurance that God is with us. Here. Now. In our lives always, even as we may walk through spiritual wildernesses.

That is not only God’s promise, but the reminder to share the love of God with others, to share our own experiences of God and God’s grace. We can reach out to someone who is going through a similar experience, or show support to those who are struggling. We can make a difference in someone else’s life by being who God has called us to be, flaws and all. God will be with us and work through us. That is a promise we can trust. Amen.



PRAYER LIST

Andi & her husband

Marlo Hanson

Jeanne Westcott

Jim Slater

Amelia and Michelle

Barbara Glidden

John

Gil Stebbins

Danny Westbrook

Dan Strange

Bobbie Noble

Judy Doyon

Kathy and James

Rev. Charles Hartman

Fellowship Village

Those who have lost loved ones to

COVID-19

Those in nursing and assisted living care

Our Denomination

Our Church Family