

## Union United Methodist Church

### Sermon Outline: **Lent3: Christ Our Rock and Living Water**

March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Pastor Michael Larbi

Readings: **Exodus 17:1-7; John 4:5-15; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13**

#### 1. **Moses and Water from the Rock**

Our scripture lessons today start from a time in the Old Testament when Israel had been redeemed from slavery in Egypt, had crossed the red sea through God's mighty acts, and were in the wilderness (desert) between the red sea and the promised land of Canaan. This story is about how God met the needs of a nation that had run out of drinking water.

Today we shall look at two instances of the Israelites running out of water – one in Exodus 17 and the other in Numbers 20. God gave Moses specific instructions to follow to obtain the water the people needed – *the directions were not the same.*

- **Israel Camp in Rephidim, "Strike the rock": Exodus 17:1-7**

" 2The 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?"

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

5The 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. 6I 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.

7He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, "**Is the Lord among us or not?**"  
Exodus 17:2,4-7 NRSV.

**Note:** The people complaining about their needs and saying "Is the Lord among us or not" is called **testing the Lord**. For us, Immanuel is with us!

- **Camp at Kadesh, "Speak to the rock": Numbers 20:1-14**

The instructions to Moses in the second instance recorded in Numbers 20 was specific: "speak to the rock." In his anger and frustration with the people, Moses disobeyed the Lord and struck the rock - not once, but twice. The Lord did not overlook this disobedience.

"Now there was no water for the community, and the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron. **3They quarreled with Moses and said, " ... 4Why did you bring the Lord's community into this wilderness, that we and our livestock should die here? 5Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place? ..."**

7The Lord said to Moses, 8"Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. **Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water.** You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink."

9So Moses took the staff from the Lord's presence, just as he commanded him. 10He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, **"Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" 11Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank.**

12But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, **"Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them."**

Numbers 20:2-5,7,9-12 NIV

It is important for us to remember that what we do in our anger matters. Many acts of disobedience to God are committed because people yield to the urge to lash out when angry or frustrated.

As Paul instructs,

**"Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil."** Ephesians 4:26 NRSV

## 2. Significance of the Rock that “followed” Israel.

The apostle Paul in I Corinthians 10 gives us warnings based on lessons learned from Israel’s time in the wilderness and how God dealt with them then. It is interesting that Paul is writing to a gentile congregation (mostly non-Jewish Christians in the city of Corinth) but he emphasizes that these are lessons for Christians as well.

“I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters,

that our ancestors were all under the cloud,

and all passed through the sea,

2and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,

3and all ate the same spiritual food,

**4and all drank the same spiritual drink.**

**For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them,  
and the rock was Christ.**

**5Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them,  
and they were struck down in the wilderness.**

6Now these things occurred as examples for us,  
so that we might not desire evil as they did.

**7Do not become idolaters** as some of them did; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play.”

**8We must not indulge in sexual immorality** as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day.

**9We must not put Christ to the test**, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents.

**10And do not complain as some of them did**, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come.

12So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall.”

1 Corinthians 10:1-11 NRSV

**Note** the reasons why the first generation of Israel out of Egypt never made it into the promised land. We must not take our salvation for granted and live anyhow.

### 3. Christ our Rock and Source of Living Water

These stories from Israel's time in the wilderness give us a deeper understanding of what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4.

13Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14but **those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.**"

John 4:13-14 NRSV

"Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but **whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.**"

John 4:13-14 NKJV

Jesus was the rock from whom water flowed to satisfy the thirst of the Israelites in the wilderness. They drank, became thirsty again but the water run out. Natural physical water can satisfy our thirst but not permanently. We must keep drinking.

From the same Rock (Jesus) we can now drink of spiritual water that never runs out. This spiritual water is the spiritual life of God we receive when we accept and believe Jesus to be God's gift of salvation to us. We are renewed in our inner beings (our heart, our spirit) by the Spirit of God. This spiritual life in us is never ending - it continues into eternity. It is a life that we receive from Jesus, "a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

On becoming Christians, the Holy Spirit engages ("bears witness) with our human spirit. That is how we know that we are the children of God.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but **you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."** 16**The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God**" Romans 8:14-16 NKJV

#### 4. Some Lent Lessons

- **Keep Drinking the Living Water**

How do we keep drinking from this living running water that Christ gives?

**“Do not get drunk with wine,** for that is debauchery; **but be filled with the Spirit,** 19as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, 20giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Ephesians 5:18-20 NRSV

- **Discerning the Body of Christ**

We must be careful to discern the Body of Christ.

Moses was instructed to strike the rock once and the next time to speak to it.

However, he struck the rock again, twice, when he was simply asked to speak to it. Did he discern the rock to be Christ following them, as Paul explains to us? It seems not. He might have been more careful to follow the instructions given him.

We have to remember that all of us who have accepted, received, and believed in Christ are part of His body. Thus, we must be careful how we treat each other. We are not to keep striking the body of Christ when Christ has already been pierced and crucified for our sins and risen again.

Paul’s instructions and warnings about partaking in Communion emphasizes the importance of discerning the body of Christ.

“So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. **Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.** For **those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment.**” 1 Corinthians 11:27-31 NIV