

Grace, mercy and peace are now yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ, Amen.

In the midst a season of panicking buying, of stocking up, or making sure that you and your family has everything you need to ride out the next however long we will under lock down, each one of us have learned the value of things that a few weeks ago was common place. What was once a quick trip to the store away is now a hope and prayer as we wait in line to get into stores. Where once our head was focused on the big things in life, the small details of the day to day are highlighted and brought to our concern. Things like basic food stuffs, water bottles, toilet paper, hand sanitizer and Clorox wipes have overnight gone from common household items to rare commodities that are hoarded and stashed away in the safe places of our homes.

These last few days have completely shifted our focus, our priorities and even our schedule. It has called into question things we thought certain, our jobs, our healthcare and our assurance that we will have our basic needs meet in a timely manner. Even our church life is disrupted as we are even meeting online together instead of face to face. The world seems to be turned upside down in the last few days. Nothing seems normal, there doesn't seem to be any assurance of our daily needs and we don't know when this will come to an end. It can lead us to feel hopeless, isolated and alone. These days can certainly make even the strongest of us anxious and nervous.

Tonight, we gather together around the word of God. This week in our Lenten sermon series we come to Exodus chapter 17. So far in the story the people of God have been in the land of Egypt for 430 years and have lived next to the waters of the river Nile. Through this river, God had provided for generation after generation of His people with stable farming, access to food, and for generation after generation he had provided fresh water for the people to drink. After Pharaoh enslaved God's people, the Lord worked signs and wonders in the land and after released from their captivity in Egypt, they have been rescued from impossible odds from an enemy that seemed unbeatable through the waters of the Red Sea and now the people of God are being led through the desert. Walking through the wilderness together as God guides and directs them. In our story for today it has been a month since the people left the land of Egypt and now today God leads them to a place called Rephidim.

When the people of God arrived and set up camp at Rephidim they realized rather quickly that there was no water to drink. Thousands of people gathered together in a camp without a single drop of water to drink amongst them. Not only the people but with them came their animals, herds and flocks. Thousands of people and thousands of animals, all thirsty, all in need. What a disaster the people find themselves in. The people of God have gone through a shocking transition since departing Egypt. For 430 years water was the least of their worries. Water was everywhere in Egypt; it was the one thing the people could never run out of. Now sitting in the dust of the desert, in a wilderness dry and barren it is all they can think about. It is their all-encompassing need. The people are thirsty and there is nothing they can do to satisfy their need.

So the people come to Moses, whose name ironically means drawn from the water, and say to him: Give us water to drink. Moses responds rather sharply: “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?” Moses is surely remembering what God has gotten them through so far. From hearing God speak from the burning bush, from the plagues that God unleashed on Pharaoh and the people of Egypt, to the walls of water that God brought the people through and crushed their enemies with. God has been with the people every step of the way. He has provided for their every need, he has destroyed their enemies and won impossible battles on their behalf. God has done the impossible for the people, why would he kill them here?

Our text continues: “But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?” So Moses cried to the Lord, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.” What happens next is incredible to behold. God hearing the quarreling, fear and need of the people sends Moses, to provide for the people in one of the more unique miracles of the Bible. It is recorded for us: and the Lord said to Moses, “Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.” Moses strikes the rock with the staff used to part the waters and behold, the people who are once again in an impossible situation with no way out are rescued.

Moses strikes the rock and lifesaving water comes streaming forth. The people and their animals are safe once again.

Our passage ends with a rather sad ending. And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord by saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?” The people that had seen God act in many and amazing before their eyes, who had seen God destroy Pharaoh and part a sea, wondered in their thirst - Is the Lord among us or not. Is the Lord among us or not?

Like the people of Israel these last few days have been a transition that many of us were not prepared for. We look back on the time before this virus began and think of the many blessings that we often took for granted. A time where we could fill all of our needs with a simple trip to the store. There was no fear with what would be there or not be there. We could gather in community together. Shake hands with one another, hug family, see each other face to face. Even much of what we enjoy in our free time has been canceled or postponed. Our most basic needs as humans feels under threat. We are experiencing a physical thirst in abundance.

As we saw with the people of God in the wilderness when our physical needs manifest it also impact our spiritual health. So in the midst of this thirst, in the midst of this need we face, our spiritual wellbeing can be harmed as well. What was once a stable part of our spiritual lives together has become disrupted, we are meeting over the

internet, the bible studies that met together and brought us the word of God in a personal way are canceled. In the middle of all of this chaos our faith can be impacted.

The evil one can use all of this life change to negatively impact us. This time of isolation from one another can feel like darkness. Feelings of being alone arise, we miss the connection that we had with others in our faith. We can feel hopeless as timetables get moved back again and again. Jobs terminated, families alone and afraid. We can mistrust others as they can get us sick or take from us things we need. It can feel as though evil is winning. When we feel isolated and alone we can even begin to ask the question where is God? People are afraid, sick and dying, they are alone and isolated, they sit in darkness. Where is God in all of this? Is the God who split the red sea still able to protect and watch over His people today? Where is our Moses? Who can split the rock for us and provide comfort and assurance in a time of need like this?

This is not only our question but what the world is crying out as we deal with as well. Paul offers us an important answer. He speaks to us the story that we have heard spoken these last few Wednesdays. Yet he tells us that the spiritual rock that we take part in is Christ. As Moses hit the rock in the wilderness with His staff, splitting the rock open and providing life giving water for the people, Christ our Lord was struck. He was beaten, spit upon, nailed to cross and died, after his death he was pierced with a spear in his side and from his side blood and water.

In Jesus death the thirsty find their living water. The sin, evil and brokenness of the world is defeated in a flood of Christ's blood. We are washed clean in the blood of the lamb. In Jesus death the question of whether God is with us is made plain. Christ our Lord died for you and for me, and In his death we find living water: our sins forgiven, we are made children of God - we are assured that in the midst of our need in this world, in the midst of our spiritual and physical thirst that the Lord is right here amongst us. In his resurrection we are given more even more hope - that one day all of our thirsts will be dealt with and we will be made new and rise like Christ into the new creation which will have no end.

Christ our living water, has poured himself out for you. That you might have confidence and assurance in His promises for you. For those feeling alone in this time of Isolation, you are not alone, you are not forgotten, Christ our King, the one who died for you, is with you. For those who are fearful for the coming weeks know that the kingdom of heaven is yours and nothing this side of heaven can take that hope from you. Your eternity is secured and you are free to live in the hope our savior brings. In a world of uncertainty and fear Christ is our anchor in the storm. As we go about life in this new normal - remember who you are and whose you are. That virus, fear and the evil of the world cannot take from you what Christ's promises have given.

While we navigate these difficult and dark times together anchored into Christ our king. Let us be a people that brings living water to our neighbors and friends who are thirsty for peace in this chaos. I encourage you to find ways to safely share the peace

of Christ with others. A phone call to that person who is alone and scared. Bringing food and assistance to those who have lost their jobs or hours. Ultimately when fears arise and uncertainty takes us - remembering Christ our lord. Our very present God who has made us His own - In Jesus name - Amen.