

Sermon for September 27, 2026

"Exodus: Water"

Exodus 17:1-7

They put the LORD to the proof by saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?" You know we don't trust what we can't see. It's only natural. We can't see peace, so we fear violence. We can't see love, so we hate. We can't see hope, so we despair. We can't see God, so we wonder if we are all alone.

That is part of being human. Oriental thought speaks of the past as being in front of us and the future behind us. They imagine human beings as walking backwards into the future. We don't know where we are going. We can see the past clearly, but we cannot see the future. We are blind to what is going to happen to us, and many times it surprises us as if it came up on us from behind.

Because we can't see the future some of us try to let someone who can see the future lead us into it. That takes a lot of trust. It takes a lot of trust to say "O.K. God, we trust you to lead us into the future to the good gifts you have for us. We would rather see the future for ourselves. Instead of trusting in something we can't see, we would rather trust in ourselves. Human beings would rather grope in the dark. We would rather trust ourselves than trust in God.

The Israelites were like a person walking backwards into an unknown future. It was easy for them to look back into the past and remember Egypt. With its plentiful waters from the Nile, the safety of the protection of Pharaoh, and the job security of being a slave. They weren't too sure about what awaited them out in the wilderness. They might never find a place to settle and make a living. They could be attacked by a band of thieves. They could even die of thirst.

So, the people began to grumble again. As they traveled through the desert, they found no water waiting for them, so they began to find fault with Moses. They said "Moses why did you bring us out of Egypt. At least we had water there. Our children had hope for survival there. Out here we could easily die of thirst." You are our leader. You find us water."

But it was not just Moses who they found fault with, it was God. Moses was the one whom God had chosen to lead them to the promised land, and it was God's purpose they were questioning. They couldn't see God, or the future that awaited them. So, they found fault and said, "Is God really among us or not?"

That's a good question: "Is God really among us or not?" People have often asked that. As I said, we don't know our future. We are blindly walking backwards into the future. Those of us who are worshippers of God have decided to let God lead us into that dark valley of the future. Sometimes we walk into troubled times: like the people of Israel. When we are led into a desert, we ask ourselves, "Is God really leading us or not?" That is natural. It is part of our nature to want to see where we are going, and it takes an effort to trust in something we can't see. So, to ask, "Is God with us?" is perfectly natural.

It's also a good question. It's a good question because I know the answer, and I

hope all of you do too. I believe the best example of the belief that God is with us is in the story of the Israelites in the desert. They were unsure of their future and God had led them into the desert. We know that God had led them there to take them to the promised land, but you see that is in our past, it was in their future, and they couldn't see it as clearly as we can. So, they worried,

Yet, God was with them. To prove it God told Moses to go before them and to cause water to come out of the rock. God showed them that they were not alone. God also showed them that they would be taken care of.

In Jesus' day the children of Israel were still asking that question. They were still wondering "Is God among us or not?" They knew what God had done in the past, but they were unsure of their future. They were occupied by the Romans, and they were made to pay tributes to Caesar. Before Caesar it was the Greeks and before them someone else. The God who had led them to a land flowing with milk and honey had allowed them to be conquered so that the milk and honey had to be sent to Rome. God had led them into a desert, and they saw no way out. So, they asked, "Is God with us or not?"

To answer that question God decided to come down and say once and for all time "I am here." So, God was born in the person of Jesus whom we call Christ, the only begotten son of God. Jesus is the final Word in answering that age old question. [no pun intended]

But people still asked the question. So, one day Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" They said, "Some say you are John the Baptist or Elijah or some other prophet who has risen from the dead." Then Jesus got personal and said, "But who do you say that I am?" And brave Peter said, "You are the Christ the son of the living God" and you are here.

God is leading each of us to a promised land. God has a land flowing with milk and honey waiting for all of us. We can't see where God is taking us because we are walking backwards. Sometimes to get there we need to go through a wilderness or a desert. Since we have trouble allowing someone else to lead us, we wonder: "has God really led me here?" We ask ourselves, "Is God really with us or not?"

At those times Jesus sits us down and says, "who do people say I am?" We say, "Some say a good moral teacher, some say a godly man, others say a man who knew God in a special way." But then Jesus gets personal and says, "But who do you say I am?" If we can say, "You are the Christ the Son of the living God," then we have our answer. Jesus is God in the flesh, and he lived as we live and died as we will die, and he is here alive again leading us through the wilderness giving us living waters.

God is with us! In the desert God gave water from a rock for the children of Israel. In our day God sends Jesus. He gave himself for us. During his crucifixion they struck his side and water and blood flowed out. Once again God provided water of life, this time for all humanity.

God is with us indeed!