

*The Solution for All We Need*

*Exodus 17:1-7*

*Sermon*

*03/12/2023*

“Come on, Boys! Let’s pick up and go!”

It was a miserable Field Training Exercise in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

We were out there for two weeks with nothing but rain and 40-degree weather and a third of the soldiers were sick and miserable.

But the training had to go on, the tents had to be pitched, the concertina wire had to be put up to secure our perimeter and the all night war games had to be executed to prepare us for a war I never went to.

You would not believe the joy in our faces when they announced that we had attained our training objectives early and we would be heading back to Denver and home to our families earlier than we had anticipated.

The GP Small tents we slept in were taken down, the trucks and trailers were loaded, and then we pulled them into our assigned positions for the convoy home.

It always amazed me how long we would take to set up camp. I figured it was because we knew we were out there for a few weeks anyway, why not kill as much time as possible setting up? It seemed to keep the officers at bay, and if we weren’t caught with nothing to do, they couldn’t think up more things for us to do that added nothing to the quality of our training.

Ah, Army life! The Navy gets the gravy, and the Army gets the beans! So the Martin and Lewis Movie, “At War with the Army” said in 1950.

No, we didn’t get much and it was rarely any good when we did, so when it was time, and we heard the faithful cry of the First Sergeant, “Come on Boys, let’s pick up and go!”

We did! Really fast!

The privates would hit our mess area knowing we would have extra food to give away, whether it was coffee, candy bars, Kool Aid packets and the like. They would help us break down and we would pass the extras to whoever helped so we didn’t have to store it back in garrison.

Then I would always join the police line to help pick up trash, because I knew the 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant would be inspecting the area with his eagle eyes and if there was even one piece of trashed discovered, I knew we would all have to line up and police the area once again.

So I made a game of it, actually trying to make sure I had more pieces of trash than anyone each time we walked the line, and others would even try to compete with me, which of course made the clean-up much more efficient and less likely to be done again if we missed any.

All the while the First Sergeant watched from on high standing on the hood of a "Deuce and a Half" the M35 Military truck.

Some complained that he wasn't helping, just watching. But it never bothered me, because I knew he was always working on our behalf, interceding with the ornery officers, and more often than not did way more for us than we ever did for him above and beyond just our normal duties.

He really understood us, could empathize with us, and did his job so well we almost never had to deal with an overbearing officer.

And...He was always there.

Standing vigil, ready to advise, and knowledgeable of everyone's job. So I never minded if he told me to leap over a building, because I knew, if he asked me to do something, he could easily do it himself, but trusted me with doing it instead.

Today the Israelites are joyfully pulling up stakes, and they are likewise falling, into an almost military precision order, to travel the most efficient way possible.

Only their journey is not taking them home, at least not yet. And along the way, they realize that they have no water Rephidim, and their joy at moving quickly becomes panic for survival.

Now anyone that has found themselves in harsh conditions like the desert and the requisite heat knows how important water is.

We all live in Florida and we know that we have to keep it on hand where we work, in our cars, when we're walking on a hot day, or any activity at all. If we know we can't get water there, we make sure we bring enough with us.

I personally drink a lot of water myself. So much so people have been concerned that I drink too much! But all my doctors say it's great and even want to be on my list to give them one of my kidneys should they ever need one!  
But I'm never giving them away, because it's the best thing I got going and, honestly, I want to keep them.

But that is not the only reason I drink so much water. I find that when I am hydrated, it's easier to think, to exercise, and to manage what I eat. It just keeps my entire system in balance, so much so; there is only two things I have to make sure I have to have for a successful day, my first and only cup of coffee first thing in the morning, and then a Yeti Tumbler full of water wherever I go.

I can pretty much handle anything in a twelve-hour period if I have those two things.

So I totally get why the Israelites are grumbling as the texts says today, water is critical, and needed for their flocks, which are critical too, and Rephidim does not appear to have any water at all.

They say if you are thirsty, you are already dehydrated, so the panic in this desert community is well justified by our standards today, but the problem in lies that they are complaining instead of requesting, and contending for a problem, rather than preparing for a solution that God already has in place.

There is an old saying that goes, "it's a solution, looking for a problem, that no one knows they have!"

It seems to me, often, how innovation works; in cars, computers, mobile phones, and various other things we have in our lives that we simply can't imagine living without.

But mobile phones are a great example of a solution looking for a problem. First of all, more than half of us seated right here right now, remember what it was like to NOT have a mobile phone.

When we went out as teenagers, we told our parents where we were going, and called them from there if they thought it was necessary, or used a pay phone if we were not at someone's house or church, or school.

And miracle upon miracle all of us survived without the convenience of a mobile phone!

Now, I see parents slipping phones into their kindergarten age children's backpack in carline, like they're gonna need it in the 7 hours they are apart.

Now remember, we have strict prohibitions on the use of phones in school by students and there are many reasons for that, but chiefly, it's because they don't need it for school.

So we have found a need for the solution we had first, whether we needed that solution or not!

In a way, the Israelites have it backwards too. They are not technically thirsty yet, but they know the solution is water, whether they need it or not.

What they are ignoring is what they need, in place of the solution they already had in mind.

Moses seems to be getting kind of irritated with them, but I think he is simply trying to communicate with them concerning what they really need, instead of the solution they had in mind, looking for a need to accommodate that solution!

And he points it out to them by letting them know. You don't need water; you really need the one who will provide you with water.

Earlier they complained about bread, and again, Moses told them, in so many words, they didn't need bread, they needed the one who provided them with bread.

Later they would need weapons and soldiers to fight Amalek who came to vanquish them, then Moses showed them, they did not need a victory in battle they needed the one who would give their enemies into their hands.

And then the Israelites would turn to worship a Golden Calf in the image of Baal, calling a feast to the LORD with Drink and Play, so God sent Moses down the mountain to show them that they did not need a false image of God that provided nothing, they needed God who saved them from slavery in Egypt.

Well they seemed to have forgotten all that again today. And we should not judge harshly because...we forget too.

When someone gets sick, we think we need antibiotics, good doctors, and hospitals. But what we really need is our God who provides us not only with medical ministry, but with the ability for them to heal us as well.

When we come up short on rent, bills, paying tuition, or the payment on the new car. We don't need money; we need the one who teaches us to manage our money faithfully and tithed it joyfully.

When we think we need peace, joy, and love between friends and family, Jesus reminds us that we need the peace that surpasses all understanding, fellowship at church in the peace of Christ, and friends at church because of the ultimate friend we have in Jesus.

God proved it today in our lesson and continues to prove it every day, specifically standing on the rock at Horeb, in the person of the redeeming, life giving, water providing, God they could see....

...to Jesus in our midst who redeems us every day from our sins, baptizing us through the Water and His' very word and letting us see Him in the sacrament and where two or more are gathered in His name.

He is the only solution for literally everything we need.

AMEN

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