



A Picture of God's Guidance for Our Lives

Considering a Message from Exodus 17:1-7

For the Week of July 15th, 2018

The Bible compares our life in the world to life in a barren wilderness. In such a place life, and what is needed to sustain life, is lacking. Because of sin death reigns around us and within us. As Paul explains: "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:19-23). But into this wilderness world came Jesus the Messiah. Having compassion on the weary multitudes, He granted an abundance of bread to the 4000 (Mark 8:1-9). So also our Lord Jesus, having endured the burden of sin now shares the Bread of Life with His people. We receive this as we hear His Word—also as we receive the Sacrament of the Altar, He is giving you His very body and blood for your forgiveness. What a wonderful blessing: "the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." In our Old Testament Lesson and Sermon Message, we also hear of our gracious, merciful God who provides for the needs of His people in the Sinai wilderness as He provides for those who thirst (Exodus 17:1-7). Likewise He graciously satisfies our spiritual thirst, giving us the refreshment of Christ through Word and Sacrament. We can rejoice to know that God guides our way; with patience, with His providence.

Opening Prayer: We thank You Heavenly Father for bringing us together. Send Your Holy Spirit to help us grow in faith and love, especially as we gather together with our fellow Christians. Help us to always acknowledge that You are present with us and guiding us. We ask you to be with us throughout this journey of life; be patience with us as we struggle; and provide for our many needs here in this world. Turn our hearts always to where we may find You and Your guidance—in Your Holy Word and Sacraments. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

CONNECT to Each Other

For this first session, take a few moments to get to know each other better—especially anyone who might be new or unfamiliar to the people in your group. In @ a minute each, have every person introduce themselves with: first/last name, immediate family, where you work(ed) how long you've been a member of Mt. Olive, and one thing you like to help others remember you: "I'm the guy or gal who likes to..."

1. Have you ever been in a situation where a lack of food or water was threatening your welfare or life? (...if so, please share...) What are some feelings and emotions that people in such situations would have? **ANSWERS WILL VARY/SUBJECTIVE—FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS INVOLVED ARE DISTRESS, ANXIETY, STRESS, FEAR, NOT THINKING STRAIGHT, AND OTHERS... NEEDLESS TO SAY BEING IN SUCH A PANICKED SITUATION WOULD NOT BE FUN!**

CONNECT to the Word—Read the Bible text together (also consider its context): **Exodus 17:1-7**

2. The people of Israel who had been miraculously liberated from Egypt were now led into an arid place, and they panicked at the prospect of having no water and dying of thirst. Do you find this reaction of the Israelites to be surprising, or only natural? Explain your answer... **REALLY BOTH WOULD WORK—THE ISRAELITES SHOULD HAVE SEEN AND KNOWN AND UNDERSTOOD THAT GOD WAS THE ONE BEHIND THEM AND SUPPORTING THEM THUS FAR—WHY WOULD HE ABANDON THEM NOW?! YET, WE TOO STRUGGLE WHEN FACING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS—IT IS EASY TO FORGET GOD OR TO ASSUME THAT HE IS NOT PAYING ATTENTION OR ABANDONED US... OUR SINFUL NATURE IS QUICK TO FORGET GOD'S PROMISED GUIDANCE.**
3. Finding themselves in this predicament, how did the Israelites react? Who took the brunt of their anger? **THEY GOT FRUSTRATED AND FELL INTO SIN—REALLY THEY TESTED GOD AND ACCUSED HIM OF EVIL! THEY TOOK THEIR ANGER ON GOD'S CHOSEN REPRESENTATIVE, MOSES...MAYBE IT WAS EASIER TO ABUSE MOSES IN THIS REGARD SINCE THEY KNEW HIM/SAW HIM AS A MAN—BUT IN REALITY, THEIR COMPLAINTS WERE BEING TAKEN PERSONALLY BY GOD!**

4. How do each of the three main parts of the sermon answer the Israelites' panicked concern and show us God's guidance over His people? How is God's Guidance shown in...

A. ...the way He leads us? **GOD KNOWS THE WAYS OF HIS PEOPLE—HE HAS THE BIG PICTURE IN MIND AND WILL LEAD THEIR LIVES WITH THAT VIEW ALWAYS BEFORE HIM! SO EVEN IN TIMES WHEN WE ARE STRUGGLING, WE CAN TRUST THAT GOD SEES THE BIG PICTURE AND IS LEADING FOR OUR BEST!**

B. ...His patience along the way? **IN SPITE OF THEIR IMPATIENCE, AND QUICKNESS TO COMPLAIN, GOD REMAINED PATIENT WITH HIS PEOPLE. IN SPITE OF A LACK OF FAITH AND TRUST FROM THE PEOPLE, GOD REMAINED FAITHFUL TO THEM—HE IS LONGSUFFERING AND PATIENT!**

C. ...His providence along the way? **HE GIVES HIS PEOPLE WHAT THEY NEED! HE PROVIDES FOR THE ISRAELITE'S THIRST BY PROVIDING WATER... HE ALSO PROVIDES FOR THEM SPIRITUALLY BY SHOWING THEM THEY CAN RELY ON HIM!**



CONNECT to Life

5. When we face seemingly hopeless situations in our lives, how have we reacted? In what ways (in retrospect) has God's guidance been shown through that situation? **ANSWERS WILL VARY/ SUBJECTIVE—CERTAINLY WE MUST ADMIT THAT WE ARE NOT MUCH DIFFERENT FROM THE ISRAELITES! THANKFULLY WE HAVE A GOD WHO GUIDES OUR WAYS, PATIENTLY, PROVIDING FOR OUR NEEDS! ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO SHARE EXAMPLES FOR HOW GOD HAS DEMONSTRATED THIS IN PAST EVENTS IN THEIR LIVES.**
6. In what specific ways can this account from Exodus 17 help and comfort you when you face such an occasion in your own life? How would you use this Bible account to offer comfort and encouragement to a friend or family member who is struggling? **ANSWERS WILL VARY...BASICALLY, HOW DO WE PUT THIS INTO OUR OWN WORDS IN EXPLAINING THAT WE CAN COUNT ON GOD TO GUIDE US?! ALSO, FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION—HOW DOES THIS SECTION SPECIFICALLY POINT US TO JESUS AND TO THE GOSPEL MESSAGE? HOW CAN WE MAKE A GOSPEL-PRESENTATION TO SOMEONE THAT WE ARE ENCOURAGING AS THEY FACE A DIFFICULT TIME?**
7. How did the hymns, other lessons, parts of the service, etc. fit together with the Sermon message and overall theme for the day? **VARIOUS ANSWERS—OBVIOUSLY THE WHOLE SERVICE IS DESIGNED TO BE A COHESIVE UNIT/SINGLE THEME.**

CONNECT in Prayer—*In closing & throughout the week!*

- PLEASE OFFER PRAYERS that God continues to guide us as we face the struggles of this life. Pray that we might recognize and see His hand leading our ways, with patience, providing for our needs of body and soul.
- Pray for Dennis Davis and Gail Blilie—who are both in poor health and have been hospitalized recently.
- Pray for the family tragically killed in a traffic collision in Goodhue County—who were relatives of some fellow Mt. Olive members.
- Prayers of thanks for another successful Camp Indianhead for our youth this past week—that the Word shared, along with Christian fellowship, may prove to be a blessing to the young people that attended.
- Pray for the continued success of our outreach efforts—especially our parade floats and the advertising we are doing through that.
- Prayers for God's guidance and blessings as we wait to hear back from our architects & contractors concerning the next steps of our building project.
- Prayers that God would bless another season of Connect Groups—and that this program might continue to be a blessing to people.
- Offer any other prayers for those in your group who have any requests.

