



Reflection for 2nd Sunday in
Trinity, 6th June 2021

Marah Moments [1]
Exodus 15:22-27
Hebrews 4:14-16

Israel's just had a great day. Delivered from slavery. Delivered from death. Death anticipated in Pharaoh's chasing, charging chariot armies, Death feared in the waters of the Red Sea. The Lord had done what Israel could not. He had overthrown Pharaoh and all his army.

Now does it happen you that uplifting movements of God in your life are followed by deep coming-downs? That's what happened to Israel after their Red Sea salvation. Led by Moses they sang praises. Led by Miriam they danced in delight. Led by Moses they will follow into the future God has promised them. But that future that begins with a 3 day desert trek. 100's, 1000's, 100's of 1000's: babies and children, adults and elderly and all their animals walk in the desert for 3 days. With every day their water supplies shrink. With every hour their worry, their anxiety, their fretting nurtures in their hearts, as their animals thirst, their infants and children thirst, and they themselves thirst.

Then water is seen. I can imagine teenagers suddenly excited, dashing down to the water, eagerly scooping it to their thirsting lips, only to find it is Marah, bitter. After the spiritual high comes the physical earthly low. Water, water, all before them but not a drop to drink.

The Lord has delivered them. Through Moses the people have experienced the saving power of the Lord. Through him, the Red Sea became bitter waters for Egypt. They sang of the God of unfailing love who has redeemed them, who will bring them in and plant them in the sanctuary He has established, who will be their king for ever and ever. That was their song but what was their behaviour when they came to the bitter waters of Marah? And as

we see what they did, we can ask ourselves what would we do?

Would we be like the Israelites?

Would we be like Moses?

God has delivered the Israelites but now in the disappointment of the bitter waters of Marah they don't turn to Moses in hope of what God will do, they turn upon Moses, complaining: what are we to drink? They learnt complaining in their slavery in Egypt; and Egypt still lives in them. The song they sang of God's unfailing love for them was lively on their lips but not alive in their hearts.

Faced with similar clashes of life against faith are we like them? Or perhaps like Moses? That would be a better yet to see ourselves as Moses is still to be less than we really are.

Moses was always and only a man like one of us. He was as Hebrews 3 tells us faithful as a servant in God's household but we are Christ's people and Christ was faithful as a son over God's house. And we are His house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.

Through the unfailing love of God the Father, by the grace of Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit we who were slaves in the dominion of darkness have become God's new covenant people. The rule of Egypt, the rule of the world in our hearts is displaced by the rule of the Kingship of God. As the Lord has delivered us from death so we are born again into new life in this life. As He has led us through the waters of death we can trust Him to sweeten the bitter waters we face in life.

After God has made the waters drinkable He points the people forward to the Covenant of Law that would govern their relationship with Him, promising that if the people do what is right in His eyes they would not suffer the diseases He had brought on Egypt. Then through Moses He leads the people to Elim. Its 12 springs and 70 palm trees are an image of the blessings of God His covenant offers. In the promised land there would be water for every tribe and fullness for the nation.

However we are not a people of that covenant, for that covenant is no more. A new covenant has been offered to everyone, not through Moses but through Christ Jesus. A covenant not of Law but of grace. The heavy burdens of the Law has been replaced by the light and easy yoke of Jesus. The stone temple has been surpassed in us by the living temple of the Holy Spirit. Ministers are not priests for Christ

is our living High Priest, as Hebrews tells us in 4:14-16

“we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, [therefore] let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet He did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

As Paul urges in Philippians 4:4-7, like the Israelites after the Red Sea we can rejoice: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.” But unlike the Israelites before the waters of Marah, we are not to be “anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present our requests to God.”

And when we do that what will be follow? The bitter waters will be turned sweet, for the peace of God, which passes all ordinary, natural and common understanding will guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus, and further our God will meet all our needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. There will be spiritual highs, there will be Marah experiences but through them all remember Jesus promise, paraphrasing, seek first His Father's rule and right living and everything we need will be provided. Bitter disappointments will be but paths of growth to Elim.

To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.