

March 16, 2021

Lectionary Passages:

Psalm 107:1-16
Numbers 20:1-13
1 Corinthians 10:6-13

Selected Verses:

Some wandered in desert wastes,
finding no way to an inhabited town;
hungry and thirsty,
their soul fainted within them. – Psalm 107: 4-5



But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust in me, to show my holiness before the eyes of the Israelites, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.” These are the waters of Meribah, where the people of Israel quarreled with the Lord, and by which he showed his holiness.

– Numbers 20: 12-13

So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it. – 1 Corinthians 10: 12-13

Devotional:

Every Sunday morning we pray, “lead us not into temptation” as part of the Lord’s prayer. Yet, every day we fall into temptation. In 1 Corinthians, Paul tells us that every testing is common to everyone. We are not unique in being tested, though we can be unique in how we respond to it.

Yesterday, we read about God providing the water for Israel as they began their journey through the wilderness. As they came up out of the Red Sea, the waters were bitter. God told Moses to take a stick and throw it in the water and it would be drinkable. Moses did as the Lord instructed. Now, Israel is coming to the end of their forty years in the wilderness and water is still an issue.

So is the leadership of Israel. Numbers 20 begins with the death of Miriam and ends with the death of Aaron. God had promised that the entire generation would pass away before Israel entered the Promised Land. Now, Moses was recognizing this close at hand. Though they had led the people, Moses as the leader, Miriam as a prophet and Aaron as the priest, they would die in the wilderness. For nearly forty years, they had led the people. Yet, when tempted, they turned from God.

After the death of Miriam, the Israelites again complained to Moses that there was no water. As before, Moses turned to God and asked what to do. God told Moses to take his staff

that had parted the Red Sea and command the rock to yield water. Yet, Moses did not follow God's command.

First, he gathered the people and chastised them. Maybe he was still grieving his sister's death. When he heard, "would we die when our kindred died," it sounded different. His kindred, his only sister, had just died. Now, he said to them, "Listen, your rebels." Moses is putting himself into the place of God. He is judging the people. Then, instead of commanding the rock, he said, "shall we bring water for you out of this rock?" and struck the rock twice. Moses was taking credit for what God was doing.

One of the great temptations of any leader is taking credit for something that really belongs to someone else. Another is passing the blame to others. It happened in the day of Moses, and it happens today. And, in reality, the temptations we face are temptations that people have faced for generations. We put ourselves in the place of God. Or, to put it another way, we do not keep God and His commands in the rightful place they belong.

We also attempt to justify our temptations while judging others who have fallen into temptation. We make reasons and excuses for our temptations. Yet, others have faced the same temptations that we face and were found faithful. It is when we think we can stand on our own that we fall. It is when we lean on God, and listen to His teachings that we are able to see the path that leads us away from temptation.

One way we are able to not be led into temptation is to spend time in God's word learning and leaning on God's word. Then, when we are tempted, we know God is with us. We know God has overcome all evil and sin. We know that in Christ, we have the strength to conquer sin. Reading scripture also guides us to know what are temptation and sin. We can hear God's voice talking to us. Then, when someone (or we) try to justify a sinful action, we can quote God's word on the subject.

In the end, it is not by our strength, or our perfection that we enter the Promised Land. After being led by God for forty years, Moses and Aaron did not believe in the Lord. We also know that Moses is in the great cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12). It is by the grace of God, through Jesus Christ, that there is a way to escape temptation. Whenever we are tempted, the power of Jesus is available to you. Since he has overcome sin and death itself, he can help you overcome any temptation. He will give you the strength you need.

In the end, God is faithful. We can believe that he will not lead us into temptation that we cannot handle. We can walk in His path and be guided by His word. We can continue to become the children God is molding within us. We can rely on God's grace today. "Lord, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Your kingdom come, your will be done."

Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.