

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, March 8th, 2026
Rev. Gerry Gallant**

**Water from the Rock
Proper
Exodus 17:1-17**

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Come, all who thirst, and seek the Lord while He may be found.
We come to the living God, our refuge and our strength.

The Lord has led His people through trial and testing.
His steadfast love has never failed us.

In places of dryness and need, the Lord is present.
He is our Rock and our salvation.

Let us worship God with trust and thanksgiving.
We lift our hearts to the Lord, who gives us life.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Holy and faithful God,
You are eternal in Your being, perfect in Your holiness, and unchanging in Your mercy.
From generation to generation You have been our dwelling place.
You are the Creator of all things, the Sustainer of life,
and the Redeemer of Your people.
We praise You for Your sovereign wisdom,
for Your power that is never diminished,
and for Your grace that meets us in every season of life.
You are near to those who call upon You in truth,
and Your presence is our greatest good.
As we gather now, draw near to us by Your Spirit.
Quiet our restless hearts, focus our wandering thoughts,
and open our ears to hear Your voice.
Sanctify this time of worship,

that all we do may bring glory to Your holy name
and deepen our trust in You.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen.

Call to Confession

The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
Yet we often forget His faithfulness and question His care.
Let us humbly confess our sins before God,
trusting not in ourselves, but in His mercy.

Prayer of Confession

**Merciful God,
we confess that we have not always trusted You as we ought.
In times of need, we have given in to fear rather than faith.
We have complained instead of praying,
doubted instead of remembering,
and relied on our own understanding rather than Your promises.
Forgive us for questioning Your presence
and for forgetting Your past mercies.
Cleanse us from unbelief, impatience, and pride.
Renew our hearts by Your Spirit,
and teach us to depend on You in every circumstance.
For the sake of Jesus Christ,
who bore our sin and brings us life,
have mercy on us and restore us.
Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news:
The Lord is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
If we confess our sins,
He is faithful and just to forgive us
and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
In Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.
Thanks be to God.

The Lord's 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 the evil one
 For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
 Forever and ever, Amen.

Hymn #210: "Man of Sorrows, Wondrous Name" (V 1,3,4)

Man of sorrows, wondrous name
 for the Son of God who came
 ruined sinners to reclaim:
 Hallelujah! Gracious Saviour!

Guilty, helpless, lost were we;
 spotless Lamb of God was he;
 full atonement can it be?
 Hallelujah! Blessed Saviour!

Lifted up he was to die,
 'It is finished' was his cry,
 now in heaven exalted high:
 Hallelujah! Mighty Saviour!

Responsive Reading**Psalm 63:1-8**

¹O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you;
 my soul thirsts for you;
 my flesh faints for you,
 as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

²**So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,
 beholding your power and glory.**

³Because your steadfast love is better than life,
 my lips will praise you.

⁴**So I will bless you as long as I live;
 in your name I will lift up my hands.**

⁵My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food,

and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips,
⁶ **when I remember you upon my bed,
 and meditate on you in the watches of the night;**

⁷ for you have been my help,
 and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy.
⁸ **My soul clings to you;
 your right hand upholds me.**

Anthem (Music Ministry): “His Name Lives On”

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture

Exodus 17:1-7

17 All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ²Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, ‘Give us water to drink.’ And Moses said to them, ‘Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?’ ³But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, ‘Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?’ ⁴So Moses cried to the Lord, ‘What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.’ ⁵And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.’ And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord by saying, ‘Is the Lord among us or not?’

Sermon

As we begin our study of the Scripture today, we find ourselves walking alongside the children of Israel in the wilderness, a place of barrenness, of uncertainty and of testing. In the Scripture the wilderness is not just a geographical location, it is a spiritual metaphor for the season of life we all go through when we feel exposed and vulnerable, the times when we are desperate for God’s provision.

The journey of Israel through the wilderness is a reflection of the journey of every true believer, God leads each of us into the desert, not to destroy us, but to teach us to rely on Him alone.

The wilderness is God's classroom. It is the place where our faith is tested and refined, where self-reliance dies and dependence upon God deepens, where the presence of God is revealed to us in ways prosperity rarely permits.

The narrative begins with a striking detail.

Exodus 17:1-7

17 All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink.

The phrase 'according to the commandment of the Lord' is critical in our understanding of the Scripture. Israel is not wandering in the wilderness aimlessly; they are precisely where God has led them. The pillars of cloud and fire have guided their every step. Yet even in their obedience, even at the very center of God's plan and will, they encounter a crisis, there is no water.

This is one of those realities, a truth of the faith, that Christians struggle with, it is possible to be in the very center of God's plan for you and experience trials, troubles or temptations. For the Israelites, the absence of water is not a symbol of God's absence in their lives, instead it is an opportunity for His presence to be revealed.

The wilderness of Sin, the journey to Rephidim, the absence of water, nothing is random or accidental, they are all ordained moments in God's providence.

The lack of water and the crisis it creates is real, the Israelites have managed to escape Egypt, they have survived a journey through the wilderness, and now they face a new threat, one that threatens their very survival. Thirst is a very powerful primal need.

Hunger can be ignored for days, even weeks. Thirst cannot. The body begins to shut down quickly. Judgment becomes clouded. Panic rises. Desperation overtakes reason. Thirst does not politely request; it demands. So, when the people begin to quarrel with Moses, we must feel the intensity of the moment.

Exodus 17:2-3

²Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, 'Give us water to drink.' And Moses said to them, 'Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?' ³But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, 'Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?'

The word translated ‘quarrel’ carries legal overtones. It suggests litigation—bringing a formal accusation against someone who has wronged you. The people are doing more than voicing concern; they are placing Moses on trial, and through him, placing God on trial.

This is nothing new, Israel has grumbled before. The pattern is established, at the edge of the Red Sea they panicked before Pharaoh’s army, at Marah they grumbled over bitter water, when manna fell from the sky they doubted and questioned yet again. God delivers; Israel doubts. God provides; Israel forgets. Each time, the people’s memory of God’s past faithfulness fades in the face of their present need.

The place this all takes place will later be named Massah and Meribah the Hebrew words for ‘testing’ and ‘quarreling.’

These are not casual names. They are legal terms. The scene at Rephidim is structured like a courtroom. Israel brings a covenant lawsuit against her own Redeemer.

Israel assembles evidence: no water.

They present accusation: ‘Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?’

The charge is severe—attempted murder by negligence.

And Moses, as God’s appointed mediator, stands in the docket. They are prepared to stone him, the ancient method of execution. The elders are gathered, as elders were in all of Israel’s legal proceedings. The rod is in Moses’ hand—the very rod that struck the Nile in judgment. Everything about the scene signals legal action.

John Calvin noted that to test God is to invert the proper relationship between Creator and creature. Instead of submitting to God’s judgment, the Israelites appoint themselves as judges over Him. This is the essence of unbelief: demanding that God prove Himself on our terms rather than trusting in His revealed character.

We may shake our heads at Israel, but if we are honest, we have all convened this very courtroom ourselves. We have all gathered our own evidence in the chambers of our hearts. We have all drafted indictments in whispered prayers.

‘God, if you were good...’

‘God, if you were present...’

‘God, if you loved me...’

Without saying it aloud, we have sometimes waited for God to defend Himself from our allegations

C. S. Lewis once said that ancient man approached God as the accused approaches his judge, but modern man reverses the roles: man sits on the bench while God stands in the docket. Too often we believe that we are competent to evaluate the Almighty. Israel was tired of being tested and now they wanted to test God instead.

Moses' response is incredible. Under the pressure of the people's anger, a pressure so intense that he fears for his life, Moses turns to God in prayer.

Exodus 17:4

⁴So Moses cried to the Lord, 'What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.'

Moses does not retaliate or defend himself; he prays, he brings his burdens to the LORD.

Leadership in the wilderness is costly. Spiritual oversight rarely receives support or encouragement in seasons of drought. Yet Moses does not give up he does what a faithful spiritual leader must do—he turns to God. He cries upward. He does what Christians are called to do when unjustly accused, don't jump to self-defense but to prayer. In Moses's words there is a subtle trace of frustration he is experiencing, but he brings his all of distress to the right throne. Moses models the kind of spiritual leadership that is desperately needed in every generation: humble, prayerful, and dependent on God.

God's answer is both practical and deeply symbolic. He instructs Moses to go before the people, take some of the elders, and use the rod with which he struck the river

Exodus 17:5-6

⁵And the Lord said to Moses, 'Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.

⁶Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.' And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.

Horeb is in the mountain region associated with Sinai, the place where God first appeared to Moses in the burning bush.

The word for 'rock' is a term often used in Scripture as a metaphor for God Himself. The act of striking the rock is laden with typological meaning.

The rod in Moses' hand had been an instrument of judgment. It turned the Nile into blood. It summoned plagues upon Egypt. It symbolized divine authority and justice. That is the rod of judgment that is lifted and it descends—not upon Israel—but upon the rock. And water bursts forth. In the wilderness, life flows where death had seemed certain.

This miracle is remarkable, generous, and meaningful. Water does not normally come from rocks, yet God provides abundantly. The elders are witnesses to this miracle, ensuring that the testimony of God's provision is preserved among the people.

The apostle Paul, writing centuries later in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, declares plainly:

1 Corinthians 10:1-4

10 For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ²and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ

This is not imaginative allegory; it is apostolic theology. The rock at Horeb prefigured Christ.

At Rephidim, stone was struck and water flowed.

At Calvary, the Son of God was struck and blood and water flowed.

In the wilderness, temporary thirst was quenched.

At the cross, eternal thirst was satisfied.

The rod of judgment fell—not upon the murmuring rebels—but upon the sinless Substitute.

Exodus 17:7

7 And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord by saying, 'Is the Lord among us or not?'

The naming of the place as Massah and Meribah is a warning to future generations. The Hebrew names are a perpetual reminder of Israel's failure to trust. Israel memorialized not the miracle but their sin. Scripture does not sanitize the failures of God's people. It records them so that we may learn. The wilderness is indeed God's classroom. There He tests—not to destroy, but to

refine. He reveals what lies hidden in the heart. He exposes whether we trust His character when circumstances appear contrary.

Yet the dominant note of this passage is not Israel's failure but God's grace. He does not answer accusation with annihilation. He answers with living water. He does not extinguish the complainers. He sustains them.

As we reflect on this episode at Rephidim, we must see it not only as a lesson in Israel's history, but as a living parable of the gospel. The church fathers and reformers saw Christ everywhere in this passage. The rock is Christ, smitten for our sins, as Isaiah prophesied: 'He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.' The water that flowed from the rock is the Holy Spirit, the living water that Jesus promised to all who believe: 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" The rod represents divine judgment, which Christ bore for us, taking upon himself the curse so that blessing might flow to us.

Paul's declaration in 1 Corinthians 10:4—'that Rock was Christ'—makes the typology explicit. The striking of the rock prefigures the crucifixion, where Christ, the true Rock, was struck for our salvation. From the appear wound in his side flowed blood and water, signifying both atonement and new life. The church fathers, marveled at this mystery: that the God who judges is also the God who provides, that the One who is put on trial by his people willingly submits to the rod of judgment so that grace might abound.

What, then, are the lessons for us today?

First, we learn that faith in the wilderness is essential. We may be living lives that are obedient to the Lord and still face trials. God's presence is not measured by our comfort, but by his faithfulness. The absence of water is not a sign of God's absence, but an invitation to trust him more deeply.

Second, leadership under pressure must be rooted in prayer and humility. Like Moses, leaders must turn to God, not rely on their own strength. Authority is always derivative; ministers and elders are servants of another even greater Authority.

Third, the danger of forgetfulness is real. Israel's sin was spiritual amnesia. They forgot God's provision, protection, and presence. The remedy is to remember and rehearse God's faithfulness, to cultivate gratitude even in the deserts of this world through prayer and worship.

Fourth, Christ is our ultimate provider. The rock was Christ, and from him flows the water of life. Augustine said, 'Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.' The pleasures of this world are

puddle-water; only the living water that Christ gives can satisfy the soul. When we are tempted to doubt God's presence—when we ask ourselves, 'Is the LORD among us or not?'—the answer is found at the cross. Christ, the Rock, was struck so that living water might flow. In our thirst, we are invited to drink deeply from him.

As we close, hear again the invitation of Jesus: 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.' The world offers many wells, but only Christ gives living water. In him, our deepest needs are met, our greatest fears are calmed, and our wandering hearts find their true home. May we, like Moses, turn to God in every trial. May we, like Israel, learn to trust him in the wilderness. And may we, as the church, bear witness to the Rock who was struck for us, so that rivers of living water might flow in the deserts of this world as we walk as the Salt and Light of His word in this dark and broken age.

Let us pray,

'O God, the Life of lives, and the Life of my soul,
Let my soul take refuge from the crowding turmoil of worldly thought beneath the shadow of
Your wings.

Let my heart, this sea of restless waves, find peace in You, O God.

You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.

Draw us from our wanderings, recall us from our thirst, and bring us home to Yourself.

Be the goal of our pilgrimage and our rest by the way,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**'

— Augustine of Hippo

Invitation to Offering

Offering Prayer

Closing Hymn #208: "In the Cross of Christ I Glory" (V 1,2,4)

In the cross of Christ I glory,
Tow'ring o'er the wrecks of time,
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.

When the woes of life o'ertake me,
Hopes deceive and fears annoy,

Never shall the cross forsake me -
Lo! it glows with peace and joy.

Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure,
By the cross are sanctified;
Peace is there that knows no measure,
Joys that through all time abide.

Pastoral Prayer

Gracious and sustaining God,
we thank You for meeting us in worship
and for speaking to us through Your Word.
You know the needs of Your people—the burdens we carry, the doubts we wrestle with,
and the hopes we scarcely dare to voice.
Strengthen those who are weary,
comfort those who are grieving,
and guide those who are seeking wisdom.
Provide for those in need,
heal those who are suffering,
and draw near to those who feel alone.
We thank You also for the gift of fellowship and for the meal we will share together.
Bless the food to our bodies and this time to our spirits.
As we gather around the table, nourish us with gratitude,
deepen the bonds of our community,
and remind us that all we have comes from Your gracious hand.
May our fellowship reflect Your love
and strengthen us for faithful service.
Teach us to walk by faith and not by sight.
Help us to trust You in times of uncertainty
and to remember Your faithfulness in every trial.
May our lives bear witness to Your grace,
and may we serve You with grateful and obedient hearts.
We pray all these things
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen.

Benediction

May the God of peace,
who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ,
the great Shepherd of the sheep,

by the blood of the eternal covenant,
equip you with everything good that you may do His will,
working in you that which is pleasing in His sight.
May the Lord go before you to guide you,
remain beside you to strengthen you,
and dwell within you to sustain you.
May He quench your deepest thirst with His grace,
establish you upon Himself,
and keep you in His steadfast love.
And may the blessing of God Almighty—
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—
be with you now and remain with you always.
Amen.