

## Water for the Thirsty

☆ Whose test is this? (vv.1-4)

☆ Living water from the LORD (vv.5-7)

In the name of Jesus, God's *Living Water* that fills our thirsty need, dearly redeemed:

In the last century, the last millennium (Some of us actually lived back then!) a group of college men decided to take a trip to the Minnesota Boundary Waters. Later, one told me how funny it seemed when they first got there because no one remembered to bring any water. Surrounded by water, but none to drink. But that was okay, because they had plenty of beer. "You know what?" my friend asked. "After a few days the alcohol was dehydrating us. You'd be surprised how you really just want a glass of water!"

My siblings and I had a similar experience when we begged our dad to let us hike over the dunes to the ocean. Fortunately, he came along. Our little legs would take us to the top of one sand dune, but there was another just beyond it. After four or five sand dunes and no ocean, we were thirsty and begging to go back. Dad always knew the way. If you've ever been hiking, you know how sweet the water tastes.

Miss food a few weeks, you can live. No water for two or three days, and you die. On the way to total dehydration your mood, memory, coordination tumble. You won't know why. One grandmother told her grown children when they were first parents this secret about babies. "When you've fed, diapered, and burped them, but they're still crying? Maybe they just need water. They're just thirsty." So, like our souls. We don't realize how desperately we need *living water*, **Water for the Thirsty**.

☆ Whose test is this? (vv.1-4)

Physical thirst was very clear to the Israelites in the desert. *The entire Israelite community set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin as the LORD had commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. So, the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Understand, there were 2-3 million people with Moses, and that's not all. Moses said to them, "Why are you quarreling with me? Why are you testing the LORD?" But the people were thirsty for water there, so they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you ever bring us up out of Egypt to let us, our children, and our livestock die of thirst?" Moses cried out to the LORD, "What shall I do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me!"* Whose test is this?

The LORD God cares for humans and animals He created. Moses was upset as a spiritual leader because they were testing the LORD. There's only one place in the Bible that I know of where the LORD says, "**Test me in this.**" That's Malachi 3:10, where the LORD wants us to test Him with our offerings to see how generous he really is in giving us so much more than we have room for. Otherwise, we're not to test the LORD. He tests us in many ways, just as he was testing the Israelites in the wilderness with Moses.

Have you ever said, "God is testing me"? Sadly, some fear God is bending them like a pencil to see how far before they break. But that's not how our gracious God tests us. He's like a refiner of silver or gold, getting rid of the dross so that our faith is pure and beautiful. (1 Peter 1:6f) He's testing like a skillful craftsman tempers steel to take a super sharp edge. God's testing is always for our good.

Sometimes you have to wonder, **Whose test is this?** One year our congregation had to increase the budget by 15%. Back then we really didn't have a record for the cost of gospel ministry. So, one of the Voters asked sincerely, "Are we testing God?" A brother who rarely spoke, came back with such a quick comment it shocked everybody. He'd been brain damaged in a car accident that killed his father

and his brother, but he had a very strong faith. To that question, “Are we testing God?” he replied gruffly, “No! God is testing us!” God has tested us many times to see if our gratitude trusts His grace to provide all that we need. By God's grace we've passed those tests. And God has proved His faithfulness always. Sometimes God tests Christians and congregations with abundance to see if they'll be open handed and generous as He always is to us. It's a fair question: **Whose test is this?** We only pass with...

### ✧ **Living water from the LORD (vv.5-7)**

*“The LORD said to Moses, “Go in front of the people, and take the elders of Israel with you. Also take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. Watch me. I will stand there in front of you on the rock in Horeb. You are to strike the rock. Water will come out of it, and the people will drink.” Moses did that in the sight of the elders of Israel. He named the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled, and because they tested the LORD by saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”* Christ our Rock stood *on the rock* near Sinai (Horeb) as the Angel of the LORD.

Doubts about God's kindness are really a form of blasphemy. The Hebrew original here has them asking whether God even exists among them there. But God is everywhere. We have no excuse when the LORD had done so many miracles delivering from slavery in Egypt by Ten Plagues. Parting the Red Sea and wiping out the superpower army of Pharaoh and his hoards. Previously in Exodus the LORD provided them with manna in the morning and quail at night. Yes, it tastes like chicken. But you can roast it, BBQ it, or make chicken sandwiches. But you know, without water, you'll die. And without **Living water from the LORD**, your soul will die in eternal torment. God quickly sends **Living water from the LORD**.

For 40 years the Lord kept feeding and watering the Israelites and their flocks and herds. He made sure their shoes did not wear out, nor their clothes either. But Moses had to find out just how thirsty he really was and what the Lord means by James in the New Testament: *“Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.”* (James 3:1)

In Numbers 20:1, Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, died. And then again all those decades later when Moses was 120 years old, more complaining...not enough water. Mercifully, the LORD gave Moses a solution, this time to speak to the rock for it to pour out water. Instead, angry Moses: *“Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?” And Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank. But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.”* That was the second *Meribah* (*quarreling*) because the Israelites quarreled with the LORD, and *he showed himself holy among them*.

In our Good News Gospel for today, see how intent God is giving **Water for the Thirsty**? He doesn't wait for our baby souls to realize we're thirsty, much less ask God. Jesus had to go through Samaria for one woman whose soul was thirsty, but she didn't know it. Jesus offered her **Living Water**: *“Whoever drinks the water I will give him will never be thirsty ever again. Rather, the water I will give him will become in him a spring of water, bubbling up to eternal life.”* First, Jesus had to mirror her sinful life with God's law, but when then the Good News! She was speaking to her own Messiah and Savior! She ran into town to tell everyone, *“Come, see the man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?”* (John 4:14,29 EHV) Many Samaritans believed in Jesus because of her confession.

When you drink deeply of this **Living Water from the LORD**, you conquer life's hardships with God's saving purpose. The Holy Spirit shared details in our Second Reading today. (Romans 5:1-8) Could this be right? *“We also rejoice confidently in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces patient endurance, and patient endurance produces tested character, and tested character produces hope. And hope will not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who was given to us.”* (Romans 5:3-5 EHV) Lord Jesus, we're still thirsty in life's wilderness. Keep it coming in Word and sacrament, **Living water** for our thirsty souls. Amen.