***Grace Lutheran Church and School***

*Malverne, New York*

*Pastor David's Message Outline*

*"Nostalgia" Exodus 17:1-7*

*September 27, 2020*

### *17th Sunday after Pentecost*

1 From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink.2The people quarreled with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." 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 complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?"4So Moses cried out to the Lord, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me."5The Lord said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.6I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.7He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"[[1]](#endnote-1)

**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION:** Speak to us, Lord, through these scriptures. Remind us again of your lasting power. May we claim your promise and share your love. We are listening, Lord; speak to us today.

The words of my late grandfather, Antolino Luis Rexach, are recorded in my memory banks. At times he would say, "I miss the good old days." At times he would say, "I miss the old country, Puerto Rico."

However, several years ago, I did some research on my grandfather. He joined the United States Navy and fought in World War One; shortly after the war, he went back to Puerto Rico for three months and came to the United States due to the economic climate in the Island of Puerto Rico. Recession, plus the economy, was distressed, and he could not find adequate employment, so immigrated to the United States.

My point is this, yes grandpa missed Puerto Rico; however, life was difficult on the island. Life became challenging; it was not so glamorous as he alluded too. Here is the humor to the above, as I grow older, I catch myself parroting my grandfather's words by repeating my grandfather by also saying: "I miss the good old days."

My good friends, I miss the former days when we played our vinyl lP's and listened to Frank Sinatra's "All My Tomorrows" and Body and Soul." When we listen to Miles Davis and John Coltrane, I have my moments of **Nostalgia or reminiscing of the past, don't you?**

Do you not miss the good old days when people came to church on Sunday, because Sunday was our Sabbath? Now a day's, Sunday has become our children's sports day. In other words, children, including teenage sports, have replaced Sunday worship. Do you remember the old days when Sunday School and Sunday Worship, was a family priority for all children instead of staying home playing video games on Sundays?

In our first lesson from the book of Exodus chapter 17, an entire nation made up of thousands of people, are delivered from slavery. God sent ten plagues to Egypt to start the journey for liberation. Can you recall the plagues? (***water turns to blood, frogs, lice, flies, sick cattle, boils, fire/hail, locusts, darkness, and the last plague sent to Egypt, the first offspring's in the land of Egypt died).*** However, God makes way for the Jewish first-born children to "be protected" from death.

"The impact of successive plagues, particularly the last, was for Pharaoh, including all the Egyptians. After the last plague, the Egyptians begged the Israelites to leave their land. More important the Egyptians helped the Jewish people leave Egypt."[[2]](#endnote-2) Perhaps they rented a U-Haul Truck, to put all of their belonging. God finds a path so that the Jewish people can cross the Red Sea. God is so good to the Jewish people that he parts the waters in the Red Sea. Not a drop of water touched the Jewish people.

**God hears the prayers of Jewish nations for liberation from the hands of Pharaoh!**

**As we have learned from the Hebrew Scriptures, God wants liberation for all oppressed people! God takes delight in the freedom all human beings!**

After they crossed the Red Sea, the people of God had a grand celebration. Both young and old danced before the Lord. Every child of Israel gravitated to each other and unintentionally formed Israel's first Children's choir. Without a rehearsal, every child of Israel sings a song of worship and praise before God.

But as soon as the people became thirsty and they could not find adequate drinking water. They are in the desert, and there is no drinking water. There is no running water. The land is dry, not to mention that the earth is barren. Now, imagine that there is no running water in your home, and you start looking for bottled water in your supermarket, and you cannot find any? How would you feel and what would you communicate to your family and friends?

Furthermore, hunger sets in, and they reminisce about the buffet line back in Egypt. We are so familiar with the buffet signs that read, **"eat all you can for $9.99"** They missed their Egyptian tasty spicy food.

The people began to complain about Moses' leadership. The following are words they conveyed to Moses, ***"You bring us out of Egypt to kill us, including our children as well as our livestock with thirst?"*** Moses responded by saying, **"why do quarrel with me? Why do you test Yahweh?**" Moses enlightens the community that their quarrel is not with him but with Yahweh.

Moses is simply God's servant, as well as a mouthpiece for God. At times I wonder if the people were trying to "put the Lord to proof," meaning they challenged God to show that God was not in their midst."[[3]](#endnote-3)

The liberated Jewish people had a moment of Nostalgia; they reminisce the good old days. Most likely, they started talking about how good they had it in Egypt, even though they were slaves. "Their empty bellies cause them to have nostalgic feelings of their former past."[[4]](#endnote-4) Although the Jewish people complaint while they were in captivity, they did have clarity what freedom meant.

One of the signs that you have no grip with reality is when you start to idealize your past. There past involved being a enslaved to the Egyptian Pharaoh: Can you hear the free Jewish saying “back in the good old' days, when we spent all day making bricks and building pyramids, when we had no rights, and the Pharaoh occasionally killed all our male children;” those were the so called days my friend.[[5]](#endnote-5)

O, I forgot to mention, the Jews did not receive income for their labor, inclusive of having any civil rights. The people forgot how difficult it was living in Egypt. They were suffering from temporary amnesia; they were having a nostalgic moment of their past enslavement because they were hungry and thirsty.

They started criticizing Moses, and they intend to stone him. Furthermore, they demand what has owed them by both YHWH and his prophet Moses. They also want an account of why Moses has led them out of Egypt only to "kill" YHWH's chosen liberated people. **What Can I Do Moses asked God, God** responded by giving instructions to Moses to take some of the Elders with him, take your staff and strike the rock and water will come out of it? Springwater went out of the rock.

God provides water for the people from a rock. When everything seems dark and deem, God makes way for the light to shine in the darkness of despair. God is with them, the mere presence of God. This event reminds me of the words from the book of Isaiah (41: 18, 20): "I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. "so that all may see and know, all may consider and understand, that the hand of the Lord has done this, the Holy One of Israel has created it."

On occasion, the lack of food, including water, cause all of us to be anxious along with being irrational

The Jewish nation appears to embrace an illusion that going back to Egypt while being enslaved would be comfortable because it was predictable."[[6]](#endnote-6) Freedom, at times, can be much more trying and demanding. While in the wilderness, they had to depend on a God-new phenomenon for the Jewish nation. "There experience in the wilderness was uncharted territory; there is no predictability. The new experience of waking up every day, having to trust that God will lead them to uncharted territory. They are suffering from **a post-miraculous stress disorder."[[7]](#endnote-7)**

While Moses is impatient with the people, God is faithful as well as patient. God continues to demonstrate that God will always provide for them as they walk into a new and uncertain life together.[[8]](#endnote-8) However, the liberated Jewish nation cannot see springs of water in the dry land. They had a myopic vision. The Israelites, trapped in rosy revisions of their past, they are blinded to what God can do for them.[[9]](#endnote-9) Just for a moment, they forgot that they were slaves. God saw their suffering. God delivered them on top of this; God made them a chosen community. Furthermore, they forgot that God cares about nobodies on the planet earth.

This story is about the power of God, who brought forth water from a rock. But what this narrative is about the lack of faith of God's chosen people. They complained about not having water, but they lacked faith and trust in God to provide for them. They somehow believed that as God's chosen, they deserved better. Perhaps a spirit of arrogance as well as entitlement entered their hearts. Humm sounds like us once in a while-God help us.

Brothers and sisters, at times, freedom can be much more trying and difficult. *Today's passages from the Exodus story remind us* how easy it is to blame others "when we are caught between a rock and a hard place." Especially when we are individually going through life's difficulties or when life does not turn out to be what we had planned. Coupled with when life does not offer us our immediate wants, anxiety sets in, our vision becomes cloudy, in like manner, we cannot see with the clarity. Our reasoning becomes illogical; life becomes disorientated.

Equally important, Nostalgia never leads us forward. Nostalgia is a good feeling of the past-please note. I am not diminishing the past; however, it is counterproductive when we seek a new vision for our community of faith, especially when God wants to take us into a spiritual journey.

A good pastor friend of mine always says the following about the past. "Nostalgia is a candy-coated, much-improved rendering of what once was.

At times "post-miraculous stress disorder still strikes us today. Allow me to confess to you today that **I love the good old days.** I loved the way we had church. I missed shaking hands while sharing the "Peace of the Lord." I miss Sunday’s after-worship community gathering-our “koinonia fellowship." I miss kissing my good friend, Dorothy Schein on the check while sharing the Peace of Christ.

**Life has changed ever since the Coronavirus, our lives together have been altered!**

I am confident that when we review our past here at Grace, we will say we had great moments coupled with difficult challenges in the past. At times we forget that our lives together were not so extraordinary as many would have us believe.

We cling to the past; however, the past is well gone. There is a new day for us here at Grace Church and School. Amid a pandemic virus, we have learned to be an online church. The Good News of the Gospel is preached week after week, plus our prayers for each other.

Let us stop pretending that the past was perfect. Let us walk in faith towards God's future. Question for us to ponder: how would the church be different if we could move forward together? God wants to take us to a new day to a renewed beginning. The all-mighty intends to give us a flowing stream of living water here in our midst.

When we glorify the past, it has the potential to blinds us all. Furthermore, it prevents us from receiving God's new blessing for us. Living in the past becomes an obstacle to seeing the promise of a new tomorrow. These words also apply to our personal lives; it is time to stop living in yesteryear and start embracing a new vision in your life. If you live in the past, your life will have difficulty adopting a new vision for the future.

Today we are being invited to a new day, looking forward. Ever since March 2020, when the Coronavirus invaded our world, life has changed. Church has changed; we are now living in a new world. It a brand-new day for all of us here at Grace Lutheran Church and School.

At the same time, we honor the past here at Grace Church. We stand on the shoulders of women and men who made sacrifices for this congregation. We also give honor plus glory to God for their faithful stewardship. Though, we cannot return to the good old days. Dear saints of God, the good old days are not coming back. It is a new day with glorious possibilities, including new challenges for all of us here at Grace Lutheran Church and School.

Like many of us here at Grace, we have a nostalgic past; however, God calls us to a different day. Let us not get stuck in the past. Sisters and brothers let us not lose our faith in God-God will provide; God will lead us to fresh spring waters to drink from; God will quench our thirst with fresh living water!

**RESPONSE TO THE WORD**

As we wander through the desert places of life, we cry out to you, O Lord, "Give us water to drink." And as Moses struck the rock and water came forth for the people to drink, so you, O Lord, have provided for us the Living Water, Jesus Christ, who slakes our thirst for eternal life. Amen

**ENDNOTES**

1. New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright© 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the churches of Christ in the United States of America. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Adam Hamilton, Moses-In the Footsteps of the Reluctant Prophet (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2017), 93. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Perry H. Biddle, Jr., Preaching the Lectionary-A workbook for Year A (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press,1989), 271. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. A Preacher’s Guide to Lectionary Sermon Series-Volume 1, Thematic Plans for year A, B, and C. (Louisville: Westminster John Know Press, 2016), 66. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid. 66. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. A preachers Guide to Lectionary Sermon Series-Volume 1. 66. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid. 66. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm, Ronald J. Allen, and Dale P. Andrews, Ed., Preaching God’s Transforming Justice-A Lectionary Commentary, Year A (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 408. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. A preachers Guide to Lectionary Sermon Series-Volume 1. 67.

   10 Perry H. Biddle, Jr., 269. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)