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## Lent 3 • Exodus 17:1–7 • March 23, 2014

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**Lent 3 • <sup>Haupt: Lent 3 • Exodus 17:1-7</sup> Exodus 17:1-7 • March 23, 2014**

Throughout the second book of Moses, the Lord is listening intently to his people, and he yearns for them likewise to listen to him. He is their God; they are his people. In Exodus 2:23–25, when the people of Israel groan to the Lord because of their harsh treatment, the Lord hears their groaning. This cry of the people was one of faith that expected an answer, deliverance, and salvation from the Lord. He therefore draws out and raises up Moses.

In Exodus 4:29–31, the people hear the report that the Lord has visited them in his encounter with Moses. They believe and worship. After Moses has his first meeting with Pharaoh, things get worse. Make bricks but without straw! Moses goes back to the Lord, and the Lord again promises that he will be the people's God, and they will be his people (Ex 6:7). After the plagues, the people of Israel do what Moses instructs according to the Lord's word, and they celebrate Passover. Then the people are commanded to remember the day of their salvation (Ex 13:3).

In Exodus 14:1–5, the Lord tells Moses to tell the people of Israel to turn back and appear to be wandering in the wilderness for a very good reason, so that Pharaoh would leave them alone and let them wander in the wilderness. Then God would harden Pharaoh's heart to come after them so that he could frustrate Pharaoh and receive glory from the people of Egypt. Right after they cross the Red Sea on dry land and see the salvation and deliverance of the Lord, they come to Marah (Ex 15:22–25), and this time they don't cry out or groan to the Lord but complain and murmur to Moses.

Then the Lord tests them by encouraging them to listen to him and do as he commands (Ex 15:26). As Luther reminds us, the Lord indeed tempts no one; instead, he was seeking to keep the people in their status as his people. In Exodus 16:2 they grumble against Moses and Aaron. The Lord still listens to their grumbling (Ex 16:9). The people largely follow the commands of God concerning manna (Ex 16:25–35). This brings us to our text.

Through the narrative flow of Exodus, we understand this pericope as yet another episode in the unfolding drama of God's relationship with his people. The question to the people of Israel and to us is, "How will we respond when the Lord leads us where he will?" Even if the water is bitter, the food scarce, if it seems that there is no water or food at all (and here you could insert examples of crosses that the people of God must bear), or even if it seems that the Lord is not with us at all, will we continue to believe his word that he is our God and we his people?

As pointed out above, the Lord had a specific purpose for leading his people into the wilderness where it looked like they were lost. Reassure your hearers that they are still the Lord's people in their baptism, and that the Lord's promises last forever. The One who provides all this is Christ. Remind them of the great day of salvation when Christ came to be with his people, when he spoke to the woman at the well, when he preached to all that whoever drinks from him will never be thirsty, when he died, and when he rose.

However, remind your hearers that they too eat the same spiritual food and drink the same spiritual drink that the people of Israel did, and that Satan led the people of Israel, nevertheless, into temptation. Like the people of Israel, Satan will seek to draw them too into complaining, murmuring, and unbelief. Urge your hearers not to be like the people of Israel or like any of those who have gone before us (there are plenty of examples of our forebears in the faith complaining and testing the Lord). Point them back to Christ for refreshment that they might not be tempted by Satan to say along with the Israelites, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

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