

LENT 2024

JOURNEY to FREEDOM

THURSDAY 14TH MARCH

READ: Exodus 15:22-27

***'He cried out to the Lord; and the Lord showed him a piece of wood;
he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.'***

Exodus 15:25

The sun was shining brightly and I was feeling optimistic as my husband Ben and I headed out on a five mile, two-and-a-half hour walk above Lake Grasmere almost a year ago today. At around the three hour mark we belatedly realised we were further up the valley than we should be, and our water bottles were now empty. My optimism was wearing a little thin as my rising thirst had me considering the peat-infused stream water and I can certainly begin to sympathise with what the Israelites might have been feeling in today's passage – especially towards the leader of the trek (Ben was in charge of navigation).

The Israelites have been on a rollercoaster of spiritual highs and spiritual lows. They have been saved from Pharaoh's pursuing army, have walked through the Red Sea, and have responded in praise only to then walk through the desert for three days finding no water. Can you blame them for giving some less than constructive feedback to their leader? (I certainly did!) But notice how God answers — He responds with compassion having put a rescue plan in place (the wood) well before the Israelites knew they needed saving.

Whenever I read passages like this, I find myself wondering whether the Israelites would have complained quite so bitterly knowing that God would save them, or did they need to understand their desperate need for His provision first? At Easter we celebrate God's compassionate response to us through His taking the bitterness of sin and death through a piece of wood (the cross) and making it sweet through the resurrection of Christ. It's so easy to skip to the good bit, but I wonder if, like the Israelites in today's passage, I need to understand my own thirst and need before I can fully appreciate God's provision.

Let us pray: Lord, as we walk towards Easter, help us to understand our great need and thirst for You. Thank you that You showed Your compassion through Jesus and a piece of wood. Help us to respond to You in worship and obedience. Amen.

Five hours after setting off, Ben and I made it safely down from the fells to fresh water. He still maintains that the walking book was wrong - not his navigation!

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