



Sermon, Sunday May 1, 2022 “Bitter Water at Marah ”

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 15:22-27 ²²Then Moses ordered Israel to set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. ²³When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter. That is why it was called Marah. ²⁴And the people complained against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” ²⁵He 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. There the LORD made for them a statute and an ordinance and there he put them to the test. ²⁶He said, “If you will listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in his sight, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the LORD who heals you.” ²⁷Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees; and they camped there by the water.

Introduction: The people of Israel after experiencing the miracle of the Red Sea

Have any of you ever experienced intense thirst? I have fond memories of the taste of the water I drank after intense thirst. All healthy men in South Korea are required to do military duty. I also completed 2 years and 2 months of military service. During my military service, I received Ranger training in the middle of the summer. Summer training in South Korea is difficult because it is very humid and hot. So, drinking water after hard training or eating food provided to replenish stamina is popular among soldiers. The taste of the water I drank during my military service, especially during guerrilla training, remains the best taste for me. It is always very difficult for people to quench their thirst.

I baptized a 5-month-old baby, Crew, at Epworth church last week. 1 Corinthians says this about baptism: **“For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” (1 Corinthians 10:1-2).** But what is baptism? Baptism is an act of joy to proclaim to the world that we are a new person through receiving Jesus as our Savior, who saved us from our sins through His death on the cross.

However, the joy of the Israelites who were saved from crossing the Red Sea was short-lived, and the Israelites became desperate because of the difficulties they faced in the Desert of Shur. The problem the Israelites encountered was that they had no water to drink in the wilderness.

I hope that through today's text, we will be able to think deeply about the wonderful and true blessings that the Lord has prepared for us.

Body: The people of Israel in the Desert of Shur

The Israelites cross the Red Sea and enter the Desert of Shur only to encounter another problem that arises for them. **Exodus 15:22 says: “Then Moses led Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur; they went three days in the wilderness and found no water.”** What would you do if you were in this situation? After the Israelites suffered without water for three days, they came upon an oasis with water. Perhaps the Israelites were overjoyed. But such joy soon turns into disappointment. **Exodus 15:23 says: “When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore, it**



was named **Marah**.” As in this verse, the water in Marah was so bitter that we could not drink it. The word ‘**Marah**’ means ‘**bitter**’ in Hebrew.

Then the people of Israel resented Moses. **“And the people murmured against Moses, saying, 'What shall we drink?'" (Exodus 15:24).** However, Moses does not complain like the Israelites, but takes the problems of the Israeli community to the Lord. In other words, he prays to the Lord to solve the difficult situation they face with an earnest heart. **Let's look at Exodus 15:25. “And Moses cried to the LORD; and the LORD showed him a tree, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet. There the LORD made for them a statute and an ordinance and there He proved them.”**

1. Marah's Bitter Water and the Lord who Heals us

It is very mysterious how the bitter waters of Marah turned into sweet water, as in the verse above. While Jewish commentators interpret 'a tree' in this verse as merely a miracle tool, most Christian commentators say that 'a tree' represents the Lord.

In other words, without the love of Christ on the cross and the power of resurrection in the Christian life, our lives are like bitter water, and we have no strength to bear the sins and sufferings of the world. So, the Lord turns the bitter water of Marah into sweet water and makes a statute and an ordinance for the people of Israel to test their faithfulness to Him.

The essential problems in our lives do not depend on whether our immediate problems are solved or not, but on whether we truly desire to walk with the Lord in deep fellowship with Him.

Therefore, the Israelites who were saved from slavery in Egypt cannot go back to the past. They have been reborn as the new covenant people of the Lord. Also, we, who were saved through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, can no longer return to our past sins.

Therefore, what the regenerated people of the Lord need is obedience to the word and will of the Lord's promise. **The Lord says in Exodus 15:26. “If you will diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases upon you which I put upon the Egyptians; for I am the LORD, your healer.”**

In this verse, the Lord gave the people of Israel a statute and an ordinance and told them to hear them and keep them and do them. Why? The Lord wants us to experience His love and authority, which heals our pain and wounds. The Lord heals the pain and wounds in our lives.

Dear brothers and sisters! What is the most precious thing in your life? Is your life going the way you want it to? Or are you living with the Lord and relying on Him in all areas of your lives? If what we truly want is a walk with the Lord, we should be able to praise and thank the Lord, even if the pain in our lives and our personal wishes in our lives do not come true as we wish.

2. Elim's Blessing

So, after the incident where the bitter water of Marah turned into sweet water, the Israelites left Marah and came to the south about 6 miles (10 km) to the place called Elim. The people of Israel are faced with a startling situation in Elim. **Let's look at Exodus 15:27. “Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees; and they encamped there by the water.”** The 12 springs of water and 70 palm trees in these verses symbolically show that Elim was a place that could adequately meet the needs of the people of Israel. The Israelites grumbled at Marah, only 6 miles (10 km) from Elim. Why did they complain? Because they couldn't fill their needs at Marah.



Yet there is something we need to remember here. Even though we do not see Elim, Elim is prepared for us. Even if we do not know where Elim is, we must not forget that the Lord knows each of us and will lead us there. It is also the fact that Elim can only be reached through Marah. Therefore, if there is struggling with suffering, I hope that we will not give up hope that the suffering will lead us to a place of blessing.

Conclusion: We must fear our own minds and hearts that forget the Lord.

Now let's summarize today's sermon. Are you experiencing bitter water like Marah now? Is life tired and weary? Please remember that if there is Marah, there is also Elim. It is not hardships or difficult problems that we should be afraid of. It is our own thoughts and hearts that forget the Lord who is with us and guides us in our difficulties. We must also fear not obeying the will of the Lord. Now we need to be sure. Behind fiery trials, beautiful blessings await. So, after the praise of the Red Sea, I want to throw away the foolishness of complaining about Marah. And even if we are going through Marah's ordeal right now, I sincerely hope that we will all walk on the path of obedience, step by step, every day while looking at Elim's blessing and walking with the Lord who heals us.

