Mid-Week Lenten Service, Week 5

# The text: Exodus 17:1-7

# Shadows of the Saviour—The Water from the Rock

To live without water is impossible. It is as vital to our existence as the air we breathe. And that brings us to our Shadow of the Saviour this evening. As we continue our series of sermons on those Old Testament pictures that foreshadowed the Saviour, we have before us one that speaks of Jesus as the Water of Life. May the Spirit guide us now as we look at:

**Shadows of the Saviour—The Water from the Rock**

**I. Universal Thirst**

Last week we saw that the Lord provided the starving Israelites with the miracle bread from heaven, called “manna”. Now we find the people of Israel even deeper into that desert, and there is no water to be found. The Israelites again do what they do best and begin to complain. This grumbling turned into quarrelling with their leader, Moses—even to the threat of stoning Him to death. Moses again turns to the Lord. The Lord commanded him to strike the rock in the wilderness with his staff, and water miraculously gushed forth from it. Massah, he called that place, meaning “testing,” and Meribah, meaning “quarrelling”, because Israel, with their grumbling against him, had been sinfully testing the Lord. But, as usual, the Lord was there, and the miracle water flowed to quench the thirst of his people.

The thirst Israel had that day was nothing unique. Every human being born into this world shares it. So do animals and plants. They need food and drink as much as we do, or else they cannot live. But to man, God gave a higher thirst. God made him both body and soul and gave him the eternal longing to be one with God. Adam and Eve had that thirst perfectly satisfied, because they were made in God’s image, holy like Him and perfectly at peace with Him. But how that has changed since the fall in Eden’s garden! Ever since that fall man’s soul desperately needs something to relieve the burning anguish, the blistering heat of sin. Desperately he needs spiritual water, or he will end up in hell, where his thirst will never be quenched and where the fiery heat of punishment will never go down even a degree.

Is there anybody here today who knows about such thirst? All of us need to look at ourselves and then at Israel in the desert. Though they were God’s people, look how quickly they showed their spiritual thirst without even realizing it. Look how quickly they grumbled and moaned and even rebelled when things didn’t go their way. Look at how many ignored their spiritual thirst and eventually died in the desert. Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. The dehydration of the soul occurs, unfortunately, without the warning signs that accompany physical thirst.

**II. Universal Water**

God has water to give us just as he gave it to Israel that day at Rephidim. And the water he gives us is far more miraculous, and the Rock from which it comes far more marvellous than out there in the desert. Paul writing of Israel, says ***“They drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ”*** (v.4). This is what Christ Himself acknowledged when He said: ***“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink”*** (John 7:37). Earlier, Jesus told the Samaritan woman, ***“Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life”*** (John 4:14).

That’s the answer for thirsting souls. Only Jesus can give the living water that quenches the burning thirst in the soul. Only Jesus can restore the peace with the heavenly Father for which the anxious soul longs. On Calvary’s holy mountain the Rock of Ages was struck by the rod of God’s Law. With His holy precious death He has opened the pure and healing fountain of forgiveness which now flows for you, for me, for all.

Lenten time is a time to reflect on what the Water of Life really is and to ask about our drinking habits. How do I use Him? Do I take Him for granted, much like the water that I always expect to come out of the tap at home whenever I want a drink? Don’t take that baptismal font for granted, my friends. Marvel again this evening at that water of life which is granted little babies who are brought there. And think back with thanksgiving to what God gave us once upon a time with that washing of water with the Word. Don’t take worship for granted, thinking the opportunity will always be there and you can come when you feel like it and listen only when you want to. Water is rushing down the aisles this evening through the gospel of Christ. The fountain is open and flowing freely; just take a cup and drink. Don’t take that Communion altar for granted either. Sweet water, ice cold, refreshing water flows there to refresh the sinner.

As we cannot live without water for our bodies, neither can we live without the Water of Life that comes from Jesus, our eternal Rock of Ages. Thus may we daily acknowledge Him and pray: *“Thou of life the fountain art; freely let me take of thee. Spring thou up within my heart; rise to all eternity”* (CW 357:4). Amen.