

Introduction

It's the 10:45 crowd! That has got to be just a little more energy-filled than the 9:00 crowd. So, one more time: "How's everybody doing?" (Whistling and clapping) Wow! I've never got a whistle before. Nice! That's fantastic! You know, it's funny. When preaching the 9:00 service and then the 10:45, there are people who come and say, "You know what, it's alright. The 10:45... they're different." I don't know what that means. It's kind of absurd. Embrace your absurdity, okay? I think we'll all get along just fine. Man... it is good to be back. You guys look good! Don't take that the wrong way... that's horrible. I have been in North Carolina all week, so it's good to be back in Houston. It's good to be back at HNW. Other states, they do this weird thing. They try to coax you and convince you that they're better than the place where you live. It's weird with Houston because when you introduce yourself, you know, "I'm from Houston, Texas." Everyone already expects.... "Oh... I got you." You know? Like they have you beat or something. They will throw things at you a little bit, like, "Well, it's 78 degrees here. The trees are actually green all year round. We have grass that doesn't hurt your feet when you walk on it." All sorts of stuff. But, man... I would not give up where I am today for where someone else thinks I should be. Man... it is awesome to be here. I love you guys. If you're looking in your bulletin, going, "This guy does not look like the guy whose face is in that square..." (Laughter) Take heart; you are correct. That is not me. I don't look like Steve or can I be Steve. I want to be Steve. He's a good friend... a dear friend. He is celebrating. His father-in-law is celebrating 50 faithful years preaching the Word of God in ministry, and he is retiring now. So we decided it would be okay to let him go and celebrate that with his family. So, instead... you get me. I don't know if you should be excited about that or not, but you better well be listening because I speak very quickly. The reason I speak very quickly is because my name is Jacob Phelps, and I am the student pastor. If I did not speak quickly, I'd lose everybody. So this is what you get. It's not a lot but... I'm excited about what God has to say to us today.

I don't know about you, but I feel like we live in a world where everything is a federal case. What I mean by that is, no matter what the situation, no matter what the circumstance, it's a big deal to somebody. I think parenthood exemplifies that appropriately. You know, I have two kids: Ellie is my daughter; she is nine years old. Brecken is my four-year-old son. I remember when Ellie was little... everything is a federal case to a kid. Right? Everything is important to a kid, whether it's something that is wrong with them or something they want you to celebrate. I have celebrated the weirdest things with children. We don't have time to get into it all, but if you are a parent, you know what I'm talking about or if you've babysat a kid or something like that. They come and they do something and it's like "Rock-Star Central." Right? You have to... (Claps) "Yeah!!" Kids walk; they burp. They do tons of stuff, and we just get really excited about it. We teach them. We instill this in our children. Right? You're a big deal. Everything that you do is a big deal. I remember my daughter... and my wife and her family... Well, my wife lives with me, but her family lives in Illinois. (Laughter) You could see where that was going... I caught myself before I did that. They live in Illinois so we travel up there. I remember one time, my daughter was four, and it always starts right when you get in the car. With my kids, it's not "Are we there yet?" kind of a thing. It's physical needs. I remember getting in the car, and we'd been on the road for about 30 minutes and my daughter says, "I'm hungry." It always starts off really small. Right? It's almost like, she's reading a book or doing something like that. She's like, "I'm hungry." You kind of hear it in the back of your head. You're like, "Okay." About 30 minutes later, she's like (louder), "I said, 'I'm hung-ry.'" I'm like, "Baby, it's okay. We've been on the road for an hour. We're not going to stop and eat. I can't do this. It's a 12-hour drive..." It's a 16-hour drive now that I've moved to Houston. Thank you, Houston... instead of Dallas. I'm like, "We've only been on the road for an hour; I'm not stopping to eat." She's like, "I'M HUNGRY!" I look at my wife and my wife is

like... (shrugging)... "You're driving." "Thank you very much... I appreciate that." So finally, it starts to build up and build up and build up, and my daughter screams, "I'M HUNG-RY!!" I completely ignore it this time. Finally, she gets so exasperated. She throws her arms up to the heavens and screams, "IT'S LIKE YOU WANT ME TO DIE!" (Laughter) So I did what any good father would do at that point in time. I looked in my rearview mirror and I go, "Yep." (Laughter) I didn't really want her to die, but I did say that. (Laughter) Everything is great. It's awesome seeing my daughter maturing and kind of get out of that. When she says that she's hungry, and I'm like, "It's okay... we'll get something to eat soon." She's able to look at me and go, "Okay. Fine; I can wait just a little bit longer." But man... those children are demanding at some points in time, and I feel like that is a defining nature of our relationship with God... not necessarily from a demanding standpoint but being in need of someone to come and save us... Being in need of someone bigger than we are to actually come into our lives and take control and take us where we need to be. It's not necessarily where we always need to go. Amen? But it's where we need to be.

They've Seen It All

If you look at the Israelites in Exodus chapter 17, they are at this point... We've seen God do some really awesome things in Exodus. We've seen Him deliver them from Egypt, part the Red Sea, feed 'em quail, feed 'em manna... I still haven't really decided if anybody knows what that truly is, but I hear it's awesome... So I'm looking at all this stuff, and we've seen God do these really cool things. We get to this other point in Scripture where they arrive at a place. It's exactly where they are supposed to be and exactly when they're supposed to be there. It's right where God has them, and let's pick it up here: In verse 1, it says, *"All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin..."* (which is always the greatest place to move on from) *"...by stages, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, 'Give us water to drink.' And Moses said to them, 'Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?' But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, 'Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?'"*

Do you see how the escalation goes here? The first couple of times, they're like, "Oh... we're all going to die." Now they're like bringing the livestock, their pets, into it. They're like, "You're going to kill my cow with thirst." *"So Moses cried to the Lord..."* I love this about Moses, by the way. I love the fact that every time we see Moses and he has a problem... who does he go straight to? He goes to God. He cries out to God and he says, *"What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me."* Which, by the way, is the first time in the Bible that ever mentions stoning someone. Food for thought there... actually, just factual information. *"And The Lord said to Moses, 'Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.' And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord by saying, 'Is the Lord among us or not?'"*

I think there are two ways to read stories about Israel. I think one of them is right, and I think one of them is wrong. I think the wrong version to approach this or any circumstance that either you or your neighbors or your enemies or your acquaintances find themselves in, is this: I think it is really easy for us to look through the lens of Jesus and read these Old Testament stories and look at the Israelites and all their complaining and all of their backsliding. It's real easy for you and I to look at them and go, "Man, they should have known better." Right? Have you ever felt like that when you're reading the story of the Israelites? You're

reading all of this stuff and you're like, "Oh my gosh! How stupid can these people be?" I mean, have you ever made the comment... I made this comment one time... "Man, if I had just seen the Red Sea, I would have followed God the rest of my life." Right? I mean, how do you see something like that and not be in complete amazement? How do you see something like that and not be in complete awe of who God is and what He has done? I think it's a really bad thing to get really down on the Israelites because here's the deal... Rephidim... the place that they were at is the place that they expected water to be. I don't know if you've ever been like this... at a point in time of your life where you are hurting, you are in so much pain, and the rest of the world acts like it's not a big deal? Have you ever been there? I mean, I've been there. It hurts doesn't it? When you cry out to the people around you and you're like, "You don't understand; this is a big deal." Trust me. I teach students. Do you know what's defined as a big deal to a junior high girl? It's ridiculous! (Laughter) Right? It's horrible. If they don't get the amount of Instagram likes on a picture, their world is falling apart. (Laughter) It's tough being a parent. It's tough being the student pastor but here's the deal. I don't know if you've ever been there. I've been at a point in time in my life when someone looks at me and really, without even having to say it, all they really have to do is look at me as if, "Hey, man; you just need to suck it up." Man... that feels horrible. It feels awful. Some of you might be at a point in time in your life, right now, like that. Suddenly, your whole world is crumbling apart, and everybody is looking at you and going, "I hope you make it through it... Good luck." "Suck it up."

You see this thing right here. We call it a worship guide. There's a big blank sheet right here, and the reason that they make it blank is because I talk too fast for you to write too much down. But... I'm going to tell you to write down some things today. The first thing I want you to write down is... Write down this:

Your problems are real. My life is serious.

My problems are real. Personalize it. Write that down right here. If you don't have a pen, prick your finger... I don't know. Write it down. "My problems are real" Your problems are real. I just want to tell you that. Your circumstances... your situations... all of it is real. Even if it's tangible or not... it's real. If it's in your mind, it's there. How many times have you and I struggled with things that are inside our mind and not really made tangible to us, but they are a battle that's going on in our mind. "It is something real to me. And because it's real to me, it's there. I have to deal with it." Your problems are real. Your situations are real. Here's why I don't like looking at people in situations... and even the Israelites... and go, "Hey man; suck it up. You should know better." ...Because their situation was real. I mean, they were brought to that place and here's the deal. The place that God brought them to, at that point in time, it's a place, like I said, that has water... sometimes... So obviously they have come to this part where there was a drought... maybe it was dry or something like that. Here's the deal. We know where they are at in Scripture, and we know if we go there right now, in this place, where they are at right now... we will see riverbeds. Now, whether or not they are full, depending on the time of the year, so we know they have riverbeds there. So imagine if you're an Israelite and you're walking up to this place, where you know God has placed you, and you haven't had water to drink in a really long time, and you're expecting water to be there, and you show up and riverbeds are dry. Your problem is real. So I think we are hard on the Israelites sometimes. Sometimes we're way too hard on the Israelites because you and I do the same thing. Right? How many times does God guide us out of a situation or a certain circumstance or been with us in a certain circumstance or situation... I can't even imagine what some people have to go through. When that time comes... no matter what God has done for us in the past, no matter what God has shown us about who He is or not... we still have that little inkling inside of us that goes, "Why? I don't get it. I don't understand. Why in the world am I having to go through this right now? Why in the world? I haven't done anything to anybody. Why am I doing this right now?" You and I sometimes have the gall to look at the Israelites and

go, "Man... you should have known better." No... We are them... We are them. So this is not going to be a lesson where we look at Exodus 17 and go, "Hey, you know what? They should have known better."

Here's the deal. That's a scriptural focus on you and I. That focuses Scripture on me and you. "Uh, uh... no." You see, Scripture was not made to focus on me. Scripture was made to glorify God. Here's the deal. Just like the Israelites, we are a people in need of a really big God. We need a big God because we've got big problems. We have big issues. We need a really big God. We struggle. Here's the deal. Here's what I don't get... it's that we, as Christians, we love to fight each other. We struggle with each other. We fight with each other. I mean, if you don't have the same political standings that I have... I've said this before when I've talked in front of this group. What makes me upset is that every single person that I talk to who doesn't attend church or has questions about our church, or something like that... it defines me more. If I say I'm a Christian, their immediate assumption of me is a set of political agendas instead of the Word of God. Shame on us. Shame on me for that being the case. Here's the deal. I don't think any political agenda is ever going to fix the problems that we have because we have big problems, and we need a big God. Here's what I love about this. I love that we read and we interpret the Old Testament from a Jesus standpoint. I love that we serve a big God that is sovereign enough to know that when this is happening the answer is going to be in Jesus. We don't serve a God who trips into certain coincidences. We serve a God who said, "Hey, do you know what? I'm going to take this right here, and I'm going to make people think about how I provide for them and what it means, and then I'm going to show them that the real provision is in Jesus.

If you have your Bibles, turn to I Corinthians 10:1... Check this out. This is going to blow your mind. Are you ready for this? I love when Scripture interprets Scripture. By the way... I have nothing good to say to you. I might have some funny stories... a couple of good anecdotes... but I have nothing of value to say to you. The only value that you will ever find when someone gets up and speaks is in the Word of God. That's it. Let Scripture interpret Scripture. Check this out... I Corinthians 10:1: *"For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock..."* This is a direct allusion to what we just read... *"They drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them and that Rock was Christ."* Amen. That Rock is Christ which means when I look at the Israelites and I see that they need provision... that they need saving... what God is saying through Paul right here is this: "No matter what situation you're in... no matter what you're looking for... your answer is in Jesus." That's it. If you're looking for it somewhere else, then you're going to come up completely dissatisfied. We ask for relief and God gives us Jesus.

You see, the problem is that our mindset is wrong. We think that we need relief from our situations. Right? We think that we need to be saved from our circumstances. That's never what the Bible says. You see, you and I, we don't need to be saved from our circumstances. Do you know what we need to be saved from? Ourselves. We need to be saved from ourselves. Praise God that He does not save me from all of my circumstances. I praise God that He saved me from myself because I can't do anything of value without Him. There's no good in me. It's only when I pursue Him. So when we pursue the things of God, when we look at Jesus and He says, "Hey; I am that Rock from which all living water flows." We learn to walk in faith. We walk in faith simply because Jesus is who He says He is.

What Happens When We Don't Walk In Faith?

So what happens when you and I don't walk in faith? I want you to write this down. Okay? Three things that happen when you and I don't walk in faith:

1. We convince ourselves it's possible for God to fail us. It's not in His character, guys. It's not who He is. Your God does not fail. But somehow when we make it about us and our circumstances, if we are not walking in faith, we have convinced ourselves that somehow God can fail us. So here's the deal... one step further. Sometimes we convince ourselves that God has failed us. But here's what's even different. Sometimes we convince ourselves that we go beyond that. He has not just failed us... He's out to get us. Some of you might be in here, and you might feel that exact thing. You might feel that your life is a direct result in the fact that God just wants to get you. There's not one thing in Scripture that points to that. Do you know what it points to? It points to that you need to be saved and then God gives you salvation. That's it.
2. The second thing that happens when we don't walk in faith: We show the rest of the world a doubting people. We show them what a doubting Church looks like. When you and I don't walk in faith, the rest of the world looks at us and goes, "Told you so." We show them a doubting people instead of a faithful God. Write that down. When we don't walk in faith, we show them a doubting people instead of a faithful God... when we make it about us instead of about Jesus. That's exactly what happens.
3. The last thing: When we don't walk in faith, we lose sight of God's ultimate provision in the cross. Like we said, I don't need God to save me from my circumstances. I need God to save me from myself.

I remember a student; his name was Alex. Alex was an atheist. Every now and then, I found Alex in my office, and we would converse back and forth. I remember the last time I talked to him... it was the last time I talked to him because two weeks later he was taking his little brother to school and got blind-sided by a truck. His little brother lived but he didn't. I remember the last thing that he said to me. He spent hours just crying in my office. Finally, so mad and so angry, he gets up and he walks to the door, and right before he slams my door he looks at me and he goes, "The thing is... What has God done for me lately?" He slams the door and walks out. That question has haunted me. The question has been with me, and here's what I've come to grips with, and you need to hear this today. There are some people in here that specifically need to hear this right now. It is that when you ask the question, "What has God done for me lately?" you've completely missed the point... Because if you go ahead and ask that question, "What has God done for me lately?" then you have completely missed out on the most important question that you will ever ask, and that is, "What has God done for your eternity?" Here's the deal. If God has my eternity, He can do whatever He wants with me. If somehow God has fixed who I am in His eyes, when this world is said and done... I'm good. I'm great. When we don't walk in faith, all of a sudden we point people to something else other than the cross. We make Jesus into something that takes care of their issues and make Jesus into something that represents their agendas and their problems instead of their salvation. We walk in faith because of what we have seen.

Here's what I love about Scripture. Check this out: So Paul says that Jesus is that Rock... "He's that Rock from which the water flowed from." I love this. John 7:37 says, *"On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out..."* He cried out. There's emphasis here... *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living*

water. "This is Jesus directly looking at that example, going, "Anybody who wants to drink... Anybody who wants to be satisfied... The only way that is ever going to happen is through Me."

I love this too... If you go to Isaiah 55:1... check this out: *"Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to Me; hear that your soul may live, and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast sure love for David."*

Isaiah 41:17: *"When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I, the Lord will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers on the bare heights and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water. I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive. I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane and the pine together, that they may see and know, may consider and understand together, that the hand of the Lord has done this, the Holy One of Israel has created it."*

Whoa! You can't get much better than that. Here's the problem. Here's the deal. Here's what you need to hear today. What are you thirsty for? When you drink, what do you want? What do you desire? ...Because I promise you this: If you drink from other things than the fountain that flows from Christ... that other stuff doesn't last. You need the thirst. Do you know why God brought the Israelites to that desert to show them there was no water? ...Because He wanted them to be thirsty. He wanted them to be thirsty.

So here's what I have to say to you this morning. If you are in a place where you are thirsty... you are in dire need of something. You look around you and your life is nothing but desert. There's no life, there's no vegetation; there's nothing to show you that God is in anything. What He is trying to tell you is that the only thing that is going to satisfy you is Him. God purposely brings you to the desert. He wants you to be thirsty. Thirst... and be satisfied in Him. Thirst and be satisfied in Him. What are you thirsty for? When your life crumbles, what do you run to?

There's some of you here in this crowd right now, you have no idea what it means to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. You come to church because you should, because you have to, because your wife made you or your husband made you... your kids have begged you to come for years. Maybe you are here because your parents make you come... that's why you're here. When you leave these walls and you leave these doors and you realize that you go out there and you try to fill your life with all these things... whether it be relationships or your job... Status... Material things... All of those other things. You can keep doing that. You can keep filling yourself with those things, but there will always be a need for you to go and get more and more and more and more... because it will never satisfy you. The only thing that I have ever found in my entire life, a fountain from which I have unfortunately walked away from and come back, because nothing else satisfied as Jesus Christ. (Clapping) So I am going to ask you this: Have you ever satisfied your thirst for this life with Jesus Christ? If not... nothing else works. You see, you and I are messed up. By the way, that's the beginning point of anybody who wants to come to Christ. I'm messed up. You're messed up. It's okay. I'm in a desert. I'm in a dry place. I need sustenance. I need water. There is nothing I can do. I can't dig a well. I can't hope beyond all hope that it starts raining. Nothing I do is going to satisfy my thirst. So 2000 years ago God sent His one and only Son Jesus Christ to live on this earth, to walk a perfect life. At the end of His life the only thing that we, as human beings, could do was put Him on a cross and kill Him. But somehow, in God's sovereignty, what He knew was that His death on that cross was

going act as a sacrifice for you and me. It's like someone was holding a gun to our head, and Jesus steps in front of the bullet and takes it. Because Jesus died on that cross because He took that bullet, somehow you and I can be forgiven. I don't know how it works; it's the great mystery of the Gospel. I'm not worthy of it, but God yet still extends it. So, if you don't have a relationship with Jesus Christ, you thirst and you have nothing to satisfy you, but I think the message for you this morning is found in John 7 when He says, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink." Maybe today is that day that you begin your relationship with Jesus Christ. Whether you're young, old, a senior adult... I don't care. There is no age limit on the blessings of God.

In a second we're going to have a time of response. There are going to be people up here at the front, and if that's you... I want to challenge you to do something. If you are really feeling like the call of your life is, "Man, I've never ever been satisfied, and I need Jesus for the first time." Step into the aisle, come down, and talk to one of these people. Yes, it's awkward; yes, it's completely weird. I get it. But there's something about taking that step out into that aisle and coming down and going, "Man... this is serious for me." If it's that big of a deal, tap the person on the shoulder that suckered you into coming here and bring them with you. (Laughter) You're laughing because you know the person that did that. They're right beside you. That's a good thing, by the way. Some of you guys have just been thirsty for other things. You have a relationship with Jesus Christ, but somehow along the way you have been convinced that there are other things in this world that can satisfy you. It's just not true. So maybe today you need to come and you need to confess that. Maybe you need to have someone pray for you. That's what these people are here for. "Man... I can't do this on my own. The words aren't really clicking in my head." By the way... that's okay. Sometimes I'm so exasperated that I cannot pray. It's in those times when the Holy Spirit and other people intercede on my behalf. You need that. Some of you guys just need to fall on your face before God up here. You go, "I've been thirsty for other things and I'm sorry." This is a coming-home, kind of a prodigal thing for you.

I want you all to bow your heads and close your eyes just for a second. How are you going to respond to God today? You know, you will respond to God in some way. Doing nothing is a response to God. Some of you guys just need to sit there and pray and be broken before God. Some of you need to be broken up here. Like I said, there's something about taking action, about stepping out, about walking forward, about kneeling on your face before God. It's not something for people to see, but it is something... it does something. It's a psychological thing... it's a spiritual thing. It's a mentality that says, "I cannot do this on my own anymore." Some of you, when we start to worship, some of you just need to come and do that right now. Some of you need to get on your face for your family and your friends. Do you want to know why we're a people that can rejoice in God? ...When one of our sisters is hanging on? It's because we drink from the fountain that satisfies. We don't mourn like other people do. We don't hope like other people do. "Come to the waters, all who are thirsty, and be satisfied in Jesus." Our prayer is that you would respond the way God is leading you today.

"Dear Heavenly Father, we love You. Like the Israelites, God, we are in the desert, and we are in dire need of being saved. So, God, we come to You broken. God, don't fix our circumstances. I know some of us are in really bad circumstances. Some of us are jobless... homeless. Some of us are in hard relationships with our spouses. I understand that. 'Don't fix my situation, God; fix me. Save me from myself then use me. Then use me to impact a dying world.' So, God, I pray that You would convict the way that You need to convict this morning. God, I pray for the people here who need to move and know they need to move. God, I pray that You would give them a supernatural confidence and ability, not in themselves but in You, the One who calls them. I pray that they would move. Don't let this be just another time where they hear

They Saw Everything | Exodus 17:1-7 | August 10, 2014

By Jacob Phelps. Part 9 in the series "Out Of Egypt."

the Gospel truth and then walk away. We need You... only You... to satisfy us when nothing else in this world will. We ask this in Your Name. Amen."