

Thursday, February 21

Exodus 17:1-7

### Testing the Lord

Hmm - I never noticed before - "rock at Horeb." Horeb - where Elijah fled when Jezebel was out to kill him. Horeb - where Moses saw the burning bush. Horeb - where the Israelites made their golden calf. Horeb - or Mt. Sinai - where God made the covenant with the people after bringing them out of Egypt and outlined the way to life, the Ten Words.

AND - the people tested God - over a cup of cold water.

I sometimes think that we must be getting wimpy in our third millennium as followers of Christ - who would demand water, who would complain about dying of thirst, who would threaten to kill their leader, who would dare ask, "Is God with us or not?" We're too nice, too polite, too gracious, too refined, too cultured, too well brought up to be so nasty.

And sometimes I think every church member was born to cause trouble. I want. . . Why don't you . . . ? Where are the . . . ? Do you really think . . . ? When are you going to . . . ? Church fights are the most ugly ones.

I'll never forget a preaching class with several pastors who had a couple decades under their belts. The prof had one of us read this passage and then pretend to act it out. He took an imaginary wand in his hand and lightly tapped the pretend rock. "Is that how Moses hit it?" the prof asked. He hit it a direct blow. "Is that the way Moses hit it?" the prof egged him on. He gave the rod a full swing. "Do you think Moses hit it that way?" the prof kept insisting. Suddenly my friend seized the wand in both hands, lifted it high above his head, uttered a primal scream and split the rock with the force of his blow. "Ah," said the prof.

If God, if Moses is so direct, why do we beat around the bush? why do we lay the blame on others? why do we hide behind nice or nasty? Be direct. I trust you, God. I need help - now!

A Way to Pray – One wand, one rock

- Start with your rock – the most intractable, impossible, thoroughly resistant problem you have.
- Pick up your wand, simply, “I trust you, God.”
- Experiment with touching your rock – tapping, lightly, firmly, strongly, with force, with a scream,...
- Until water comes pouring out of it – the water of life – a whole handful of good possibilities
- Thank God for the gift of the wand, for the gift of trusting God for possibilities where we see problems.