

GOD IS WITH US: LIVING OUR FAITH TOGETHER

Exodus 17:1–7 | Philippians 2:1–13 | Matthew 21:23–32.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

This morning, I want us to reflect on a simple but very powerful truth:

God is with us.

Not only when everything is going well.

Not only when our prayers are answered quickly.

Not only when we understand what God is doing.

God is with us in every season of life.

And because God is with us, we are not called to live our faith in isolation. We are called to **live our faith together**, to encourage one another, to make room for one another, to carry one another, and to allow what we believe to shape the way we live.

That is why our theme today is:

GOD IS WITH US: LIVING OUR FAITH TOGETHER

There is a question in our reading from Exodus that I think many of us can understand.

The people of Israel are in the wilderness. They are thirsty. They are frustrated. They don't know where the water is going to come from.

And eventually they ask:

“Is the Lord among us or not?”

Think about that question.

They were not simply asking for water; **they were asking whether God was still with them.**

And perhaps, at different moments in our own lives, we have asked the same question.

When we are waiting for employment.

When someone we love is unwell.

When there is uncertainty about the future.

When there are difficulties in the family.

When we are carrying grief, loneliness, disappointment or anxiety.

Sometimes we may not stop believing in God.

We simply wonder:

“God, are you still with me?”

And I think that is where we can connect with the people of Israel. Their question is very human, and their experience is not so different from ours.

And perhaps that is where this passage meets us today. The people were in a difficult place, but their difficult circumstances did not mean that God had left them. The wilderness was real, their thirst was real, but so was God's presence.

That is something worth holding on to: sometimes the situation around us may make us wonder where God is, but God's presence is not measured by how easy life is.

So, rather than allowing the wilderness to define their understanding of God, let us look at what happened in the midst of it.

1. GOD IS WITH US — EVEN IN THE WILDERNESS

The people are in a difficult place.

There is no water.

Their frustration is real.

Their fear is real.

But God does not abandon them.

God provides water from the rock.

Notice that the wilderness does not suddenly disappear.

The journey is still a journey.

The circumstances are still difficult.

But God's people discover that **they are not alone in it.**

And perhaps that is something we need to hear.

God being with us does not mean that we will never experience difficulty.

It means that **difficulty does not mean God's absence.**

There may be a wilderness.

There may be questions.

There may be waiting.

There may be moments when we don't know what comes next.

But God is there.

And sometimes, when we know that God is with us, it changes the way we look at the people around us.

Because if I am not walking this journey alone, perhaps **I am not meant to let someone else walk theirs alone either.**

And that takes us naturally to Paul's words in Philippians.

2. IF GOD IS WITH US, WE DON'T WALK ALONE

Paul speaks to a community.

He talks about encouragement, love, fellowship, compassion, and humility.

He says:

“Make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.”

Paul is showing us that faith is not simply about **my relationship with God.**

It is also about **my relationship with the people God has placed around me.**

If God is with us, then we don't walk alone.

And we shouldn't expect other people to walk alone either.

There are seasons when I may be strong and you may be struggling.

And there will be seasons when I am the one who needs encouragement.

That is why Christian community matters.

We walk together.

We pray together.

We encourage one another.

We carry one another.

We make room for one another.

Paul says:

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.”

That is a challenging word for our time.

We live in a culture that often tells us:

“Look after yourself.”

“Put yourself first.”

“Make sure your voice is heard.”

But Paul invites us to look outward.

Who needs encouragement?

Who needs a listening ear?

Who needs patience?

Who needs forgiveness?

Who needs someone simply to say:

“I am here with you.”

Sometimes living our faith together is not dramatic.

It may be noticing someone who is sitting alone.

Welcoming someone new.

Checking on someone absent.

Listening without immediately judging.

Making room for someone whose background or experience is different from ours.

These things may seem small.

But this is where faith becomes visible.

People should not only hear that we are Christians. They should experience something of Christ through the way we treat them.

And when faith begins to shape the way we live with one another, we are faced with another question:

Is faith simply something we talk about, or is it something we are willing to live?

That brings us to the Gospel.

3. OUR FAITH MUST BECOME A RESPONSE

In Matthew 21, Jesus tells the story of two sons.

A father asks the first son to go and work.

The son says:

“No.”

But later, he changes his mind and goes.

Then the father asks the second son.

He says:

“Yes, sir.”

But he does not go.

And Jesus asks:

“Which of the two did the will of his father?”

The answer is obvious:

The one who actually went.

And this is where the Gospel speaks very directly to us.

It is not enough simply to **say** that we have faith.

Our faith has to become visible in the way we live.

We can say:

“I love my neighbor.”

But does my neighbor experience that love?

We can say:

“Our church welcomes everyone.”

But does the person who walks through our doors actually feel welcome?

We can say:

“We care about one another.”

But do we notice when someone is struggling?

Jesus reminds us that there can be a difference between **saying yes** and **living yes**.

But there is also something hopeful in this story.

The first son said no.

But his “no” was not the end of his story.

He changed.

He reconsidered.

He responded.

He went.

And perhaps that is good news for us.

Because none of us gets everything right.

There are times when we have delayed.

Times when we have failed.

Times when our actions have not matched our words.

But God continues to call us.

There is still room to change.

There is still room to grow.

There is still room to respond.

There is still room to say:

“Yes, Lord.”

And perhaps that is the question we take with us today:

What is my faith asking me to do?

Not simply:

“What do I believe?”

But:

“How will I live what I believe?”

CONCLUSION

Dear friends,

These three readings give us a simple journey.

In **Exodus**, the people ask:

“Is the Lord among us or not?”

And we hear the answer:

God is with us — even in the wilderness.

Then **Philippians** shows us what that means for the way we live with one another:

If God is with us, we don't walk alone.

We are called to encourage one another.

To care for one another.

To make room for one another.

To live with humility and love.

And then **Matthew** brings us to the question of response:

Our faith must become a response.

Not simply something we say.

Not simply something we believe.

But something we live.

So, **People of God**, when someone is going through a wilderness-
walk with them.

When someone needs encouragement—
encourage them.

When someone is new—
welcome them.

When someone is struggling—
don't leave them alone.

And when God calls you to take a step—
respond.

Because:

GOD IS WITH US.

And if God is with us,

WE DON'T WALK ALONE.

And because we are not walking alone,

OUR FAITH MUST BECOME A RESPONSE.

That is what it means to:

LIVE OUR FAITH TOGETHER.

Perhaps someone came here today asking:

“Is God really with me?”

Your situation may not have changed yet.

The answer to your prayer may still be coming.

The wilderness may still be there.

But hear the good news:

God is with you.

And you don't have to walk through it alone.

May we become a church where people don't simply **hear** that God is with us, but where, through our welcome, our compassion, our patience, our service, and our love, **they experience it.**

God is with us.

Let us live our faith together.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.