**Exodus 17.1-7**

**“I Honour Your Journey”**

The life of faith is a journey. It is a life of movement and growth. As people of faith, we must be willing to let the Spirit move us to new places, new experiences and new understandings. The life of faith is a journey. It is a life of change and evolution.

I am reminded of my grade twelve English teacher; Mr. Bill Smith. Everyone should have a teacher like him in their life. Mr. Smith never quite left the sixties. He was a hippie living in 1978. He wore blue jeans to school with rope as his belt. He wore tee shirts with slogans on them like; “make love not war.” He let us to call him “Bill.” He encouraged us to challenge the system and he spoke eloquently about the importance of freedom. Our final year end project was to create a Hobbit Party complete with Hobbit beer and smoking Hobbit pipes. We were reading the Lord of The Rings at the time. For many of us Mr. Smith was the best teacher we ever had. However, for our parents he was the exact image of what was wrong with education in the seventies. He only lasted one year.

I remember one story that Mr. Smith taught that has stuck with me my entire life. He said when we become adults, we find ourselves standing in a bucket of wet cement. If we continue to stand in that cement and not move, my teacher warned, then the cement will eventually harden and we will become set in our ways and unable to respond creatively to the challenges of our day. He encouraged us to keep our feet constantly moving so that the cement around our feet never sets. I heard him inviting me through this story to always be on the move, to keep growing, to keep learning and to not be afraid of change. Unfortunately, many of us have become encumbered by cement boots. These boots might be good in the wind, but they are not very good on the stormy oceans of life. This image of keeping our feet moving is a good metaphor to illustrate that the life of faith is about movement and change. It is a journey.

Our passage from the book of Exodus also builds on this theme. In this passage we meet the people of Israel on their journey from the land of Egypt; the land of slavery and bondage, to the Promised Land; the land of abundance and freedom. In this story we discover that they have run out of water. Here they are in the middle of the desert. They are not quite sure where they are or exactly where they are going and they are without water. Understandably, they are concerned. They are frightened. They are angry. They even want to go back to Egypt, back to their oppressors, because there they at least had water. They complain bitterly to Moses their leader. They accuse him of betraying them and bringing them out into the desert to die.

Moses, fearing for his life, cries out to God in prayer; “What shall I do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.” God responds to his prayer by providing them water from the rock. The people drink and for the moment they are satisfied and all is well. It is a simple, yet profound story that tells us much about the journey of faith.

First of all, we discover that the journey of faith begins with God. According to our story, it is God who is leading them by stages on this journey. It is God who has called them out of their bondage in Egypt and invited them to journey towards the Promised Land. God is still inviting. God invites each and every one of us to join the journey. We too are invited to follow God as God leads us by stages from the land of oppression, of brokenness, to the land of shalom; a land of healing, a land of freedom and abundance. The journey begins with God. God reaches out to us in love and invites us to join God on the journey.

Secondly, we discover that this is not an individual journey, but a corporate one. They are led as a “whole congregation.” This is an important challenge to our highly individualistic and self-centered society and Christian faith. The life of faith, the journey of faith, is not one we do alone. It is one we do in community. We need each other if we are to make it. Yes, we come to faith as individuals, but we grow in our faith through community. God needs us to be engaged with each other on this journey and God needs us to engage in the world around us. We need to understand our interconnectedness and work towards healing the brokenness in our world. We do not journey alone.

Thirdly, the life of faith is not without its trials and tribulations. Like the people of Israel, we will, from time to time, find ourselves without water. We may find ourselves in places that are uncomfortable, places that cause us to be afraid. We might find ourselves at times wondering where God is and whether we have what we need for the journey.

Just because we have accepted God’s invitation to the journey does not mean that out lives will be free of difficulty. Life is tough, and being a person of faith does not protect us from that reality. We still find ourselves at times without water.

We can respond to that reality in two ways. We can, like the people of Israel complain and blame God for putting us in this situation. We can look wistfully back to some earlier time before we followed God into this mess. Or, like Moses, we can take responsibility for our journey and turn to God in prayer. We can seek God’s wisdom in the midst of the situation and ask God to lead us to the water.

Today is a perfect time for us to look at our journey of faith. How is God presently at work in our life? What new thing have we discovered about God recently? Where is God leading us? Are we finding a community of faithful people who are able to encourage us on our journey of faith? Are we missing anything we need on our journey? Do we have enough water for the journey? If we are missing something we need for our journey, how are we responding to that reality? Are we complaining and grumbling? Are we wishing that we had never embarked on this journey? Or, are we seeking God’s wisdom? Are we trying to find some way to move through this challenging time? Have we found a rock full of water lately? These are important questions for us to work through as we continue our journey as people of faith and followers of Jesus.

Each and every one of us is invited by God on a journey of faith. God wants us to grow into a deeper experience of God’s love. God also wants us to engage in our world by seeking to fulfill the part God has created for us to do. God has something for each of us to do in the business of mending our broken world, regardless of our age or our abilities.

I invite each of us today to honour our own journey of faith. We do that by committing ourselves to growing in our relationship with God through; prayer, meditation, corporate worship, wrestling with God’s word, engaging in our questions and our doubts, building community and reaching out in fellowship to those who are different from us. We also honour our journey of faith by discerning what God is still asking us to do and committing ourselves to doing it. We honour the journey God has called us on by keeping our feet moving and not allowing them to become encumbered by cement boots.

I commit myself to honouring your journey. I honour your journey by helping you find the resources you need to follow the path that God is leading you on. I honour your journey by praying for you, by supporting you, by challenging you and by loving you. I also honour your journey by honouring my own journey. By keeping my feet moving, I challenge you to keep your feet moving.

I invite us also to honour each other’s journey of faith through acceptance and love. We may not always agree with how God is leading each of us, but we honour each other’s journey by not judging and by supporting each other. We need to acknowledge that God may be leading us in different ways and that is okay.

Let us commit ourselves this day to honouring the journey God has called us on and to honouring each other on our respective journeys. **Amen.**