

**4.24.22 – Second Sunday of Eastertide/Gospel music**  
**“Reassured Twice!”**

The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

**Numbers 20:1-13 (NLT) ~ Pam**

*Moses Strikes the Rock*

In the first month of the year, the whole community of Israel arrived in the wilderness of Zin and camped at Kadesh. While they were there, Miriam died and was buried.

<sup>2</sup> There was no water for the people to drink at that place, so they rebelled against Moses and Aaron. <sup>3</sup> The people blamed Moses and said, “If only we had died in the Lord’s presence with our brothers! <sup>4</sup> Why have you brought the congregation of the Lord’s people into this wilderness to die, along with all our livestock? <sup>5</sup> Why did you make us leave Egypt and bring us here to this terrible place? This land has no grain, no figs, no grapes, no pomegranates, and no water to drink!”

<sup>6</sup> Moses and Aaron turned away from the people and went to the entrance of the Tabernacle, where they fell face down on the ground. Then the glorious presence of the Lord appeared to them, <sup>7</sup> and the Lord said to Moses, <sup>8</sup> “You and Aaron must take the staff and assemble the entire community. As the people watch, speak to the rock over there, and it will pour out its water. You will provide enough water from the rock to satisfy the whole community and their livestock.”

<sup>9</sup> So Moses did as he was told. He took the staff from the place where it was kept before the Lord. <sup>10</sup> Then he and Aaron summoned the people to come and gather at the rock. “Listen, you rebels!” he shouted. “Must we bring you water from this rock?” <sup>11</sup> Then Moses raised his hand and struck the rock twice with the staff, and water gushed out. So, the entire community and their livestock drank their fill.

<sup>12</sup> But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust me enough to demonstrate my holiness to the people of Israel, you will not lead them into the land I am giving them!” <sup>13</sup> This place was known as the waters of Meribah (which means “arguing”) because there the people of Israel argued with the Lord, and there he demonstrated his holiness among them.

**L: These are Words of Correction from God! C: Thanks be to God.**

**John 20:19-23 (NIV) ~ Pam**

*Jesus Appears to His Disciples*

<sup>19</sup> On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” <sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

<sup>21</sup> Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” <sup>22</sup> And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

**L: These are Words of Joy for the People of God! C: Thanks be to God.**

**Please pray with me:**

Dear Jesus, we thank you for the invigorating Gospel style music we've heard this morning. It reminds us of the joys of your birth, resurrection, and return. Be with us now as we try to understand both doubt and trust in the Israelites' minds, the disciples' hearts, and in our own spirits. So many of us feel helpless in the Ukraine war or in personal circumstances, so we pray for their trust in you to be strengthened as you are working in them all. Lord, in these familiar stories, speak new meaning through your messenger. **"Amen."**

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It was a joy to spend Easter with most of you last Sunday! Thank you again to those who assisted in many ways. Our special music made a real celebration of the Risen Christ! And today's guest musicians have brought a real energy and revival spirit into this house of worship! Thank you for being here, Pat, Rob, Chet, and Eva Lee, to share your musical gifts dedicated to God's glory. It's been so fun singing with you again!

Although today's two Scripture passages have different contexts, there are similarities. One demonstrates God's reassurance to Moses, Aaron, and the Israelites. The John passage shows how Jesus, even after death on the cross, reassured his fearful disciples. Reassured twice! By the reading of these Scriptures, we too should feel reassured about our faith twice!

The Israelites have been travelling in the wilderness together for thirty-eight years. The older sister of Moses and Aaron, Miriam, was a respected prophetess among the Israelites during their journey. She taught the women about God's law. She had just died as they arrived at Kadesh, so you can imagine the mood of the people ~ sad and despairing. Kadesh was located at the southern border of Canaan and was known as an oasis station that the wandering Hebrews had been looking forward to, but when they arrived, it was bone dry. The people were parched and cranky. There had been numerous challenges in the desert, and even though they

were close to Canaan, the promised land, there were more murmurings and quiet protests. Chapter 20 comes chronologically after Chapters 13 and 14 in Numbers. We hear the word murmurings eight times in the Bible. It's that quiet complaint (not a violent protest) under one's breath, where you hope someone will hear it and act on it, but not confront you. It hardly makes sense that it was still a problem by the time of our passage, since God had provided for them all along: protection and health during all the plagues, safety from Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea, and provision of food with holy manna. Yet they groused and murmured complaints. So, Moses and Aaron went to the Lord in surrendering prayer. This passage is excellent instruction for us in these times because they left the crowds and people who depended on them and went to the Tabernacle's entrance to meet the Lord and ask for intercession for the people. These are more prayer tools – solitude and intercession.

The Lord told Moses to **speak** to the rock to get enough water to drink **and** to give water to their livestock. But in Moses' frustration with the cries and critiques of the people, Moses struck the rock with his rod – and did so not once, but twice! That action brought confusion among the people over whose miracle the fresh pouring water was: Moses' ability to find and command water out of the rock or God's grace and compassion to supernaturally quench his people's thirst!? Still, yes, they were reassured about their survival despite their rebellion. From God's perspective, however, Moses and Aaron failed in their apostolic and evangelistic mission. Moses did not just speak to the rock but struck it twice – almost as if he didn't trust God working through a small vocal gesture. Yet **how well** God works through the voice! We had proof of that

today! The sin of Moses and Aaron was disobedience to God's instruction, and God considered it disbelief and doubt. Even though they had trusted God most of their lives, Moses and Aaron did not enter the promised land as God's punishment for their doubt in Him. Sound a little like us sometimes?

We recall last week's Lord's Supper, the trial of Jesus, his crucifixion, and the Resurrection. The disciples had almost been arrested in the garden with Jesus! Christ had appeared that morning to the women at the tomb. Later that same day, the disciples, out of fear, were huddled secretly together behind closed doors (many translations say "locked doors"). Jesus miraculously came inside right through the doors and stood among them! The disciples must have been terrified at first. But as they saw the scars on his body, they saw it was Jesus himself! Even though He had risen from the dead, the scars were still there, because He had not yet ascended to the Father where his human and spiritual body would be restored! Once they caught their breath, the disciples were overjoyed! Then Jesus breathed his own anointing breath onto them to commission them as his representatives just as God the Father had sent and commissioned Jesus to build His kingdom. This breath was a holy spirit and only a partial gift of knowledge and empowerment to anticipate the Holy Spirit, an Advocate, to come at Pentecost. They were to preach, teach, and heal as he had done, for the purpose of building relationships between humankind and God. Later he would send the Counselor.

"Peace Be with You!" he proclaimed as he met with them, perhaps as a normal *shalom* Jewish greeting, but also as a blessing to calm them, and help them deal with feelings of guilt about his death. They must have

felt some guilt over not protecting him, because they had fled. What we need to remember is that Jesus, in that moment and again with Thomas at another appearance days later, became another visible **witness** to his own Resurrection. His appearances proved no one had stolen the body! This powerful witness affirms and emboldens the disciples to go out as they were sent and to build the church, much like what Paul experienced on the Damascus Road.

The forgiveness he explains is God's alone to fulfill. They cannot forgive as God does, but if they hold on to their sins, doubt, or anger, their sins will not be forgiven. These last verses of John's are another instruction for the disciples. This life-changing experience was yet another miraculous and reassuring communication from God. They had been taught and warned of Jesus' fate and mission several times, but now it made some sense to them. How about to us? Have we forgotten the Easter story already? Is it only one week of our lives, or will we be Easter people all year long? Will we be murmurers when life doesn't go our way? Will we stay angry at God for circumstances beyond our control? Or will we overcome our fear or terror by seeing and feeling the Risen Christ and his words, spirit, and breath **within us**? We come each week to be refreshed, refueled, and reassured in our callings to serve Christ and His Kingdom. Let us remember our faith. **He lives!** Please listen to the words we will sing and be reassured twice! Or as often as needed! **He is alive! He is Risen! Halleluiah! Amen.** |/

**Will you pray with me?** Father God, we are grateful for your incarnate Son, Jesus, his life, death, and resurrection. We thank you for these Scriptures to show us how you manage and overcome our doubt, guilt, or

fear. Let us trust you more and rely on your direction, not our own. As we continue in the Eastertide season of the church, let us use our new prayer tools to spend quiet time with you and your Word. Abide in us so that others see you through us. Let us trust and obey until we hear those golden bells and meet you face to face. **Amen.**