"Trusting God" A sermon by Lee Ireland
Cathedral City Community Presbyterian Church
March 15, 2020 Third Sunday in Lent
Exodus 17: 1-7

Prayer: Open our eyes to see your Spirit in our life. Open our hearts to receive the blessings you send each day. Guide us with your wisdom so that through us Christ may walk on the earth once again. Amen.

Looking back we can certainly see how shortsighted the Israelites were in this episode in the desert as Moses leads them to the Promised Land. We know that God had taken care of them up to this time and given them all they needed. But I doubt if the Israelites were taking the long view. Being thirsty, not having water that's needed for life, can somehow influence your thinking. The Israelites had a valid complaint.

But how they dealt with that complaint seems to be the problem. Their personal needs overtook their rational side. They didn't approach Moses asking if he would please ask God to provide water. Afterall, God had certainly provided up to this point. Calm and kindness seemed to have escaped them.

Don't we all know someone like this. That individual wants what he or she wants right now and is demanding. That person doesn't follow my mother's suggestion that you can catch more flies with honey than vinegar!

Just a personal observation relating to this scripture and this church. I was delighted at the attitude expressed at the annual meeting. Several people told me all of you want to stay together as a church even though we're going to have to sell the building to continue. My delight is that you want to continue ministry to this community, that you want this church to be a place where folks can find friends, can find wholeness and healing – whether we have a church building or not.

I thank those who brought the ministry this far, who sacrificed to build this building. I am thankful for their sacrifices. I am thankful for all the folks over the years who have attended here, who have come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior through this church.

I am also thankful for the resource that this building is. By selling it, you will have the funds to continue the ministry to the community. In fact, you'll have enough money to hire a full-time pastor to rebuild the membership.

I'm complimenting you because I believe that you are listening to God with your hearts as you make plans to sell the building and begin a new way of being church. The Israelites should take a lesson from you. When the going got rough, they longed for the old, even going back to slavery in Egypt. It's what they knew. They could not look forward to the Promised Land that God was giving them. They could only think of their immediate needs. And they grumbled.

I'm sure that some of you would like to keep the building because you cannot imagine a church that doesn't have a building that looks like a church. But, like the Israelites, things are changing – practically daily. In our world today, churches are closing, and worship attendance is decreasing. Yet, from all the reports we read, there's a hunger for what Christ-followers already have. You have a peace about your life. You have a purpose. You want to serve others as Christ served us. The question is how to share with those who are hungering.

I believe that God is going to show you how to do that. Like the Israelites, it will take trusting God and your leaders. And that is where the scripture lesson from the Exodus gives us guidance.

What is the first thing that Moses did when the people complained? He prayed by crying out to the Lord. Moses ask for direction on how to deal with the situation.

The second thing Moses did? He listened to God. When you think about God's words to Moses about taking his staff you could also add that God told Moses he had the tools needed to do the job. Moses listened and God showed Moses that Moses could act with the tools he had in hand.

I believe that Community Presbyterian Church Cathedral City has the resources it needs to follow God's direction: financial resources provided by selling the building, and prayer every step of the way. And by listening to God every step of the way.

This church is a community that loves each other, cares for each other, and wants to continue to do so. The church is not being closed. Hope is still among us. God is providing an opportunity for us to move out in a new way, to serve this community in new ways using the resources those in the

past have provided for us. One generation has provided for the next. May it continue to be that way.

Right now, we have a blip in the road with the coronavirus. This is not the time to move inward, but a time for us to show Christ's love to each other and those in the community. Let's not grumble about the current situation but rather use it as an opportunity to share God's living water with each other and others.

I would like for those who are interested to sign up as group leaders. The idea is for a leader to have a group of 5 or 6 people to contact weekly just to check in to see how things are going, to provide a listening ear. We may even provide these groups with a study to use to help us keep connected and continue our faith growth. If you are interested, please see me or one of the Session members after the service.

Here's a quote by Wesley Taylor that will provide food for thought as we move forward in the next few weeks and months. May each of us be "like David, lifting up mine eyes unto the hills from whence comes my help; like Paul, forgetting those things which are behind and pressing on forward; like Abraham, trusting completely in our God; like Sarah, laughing for joy at God's great promise; like Enoch, walking in daily fellowship with our Creator; like Moses, choosing life over death; like Jehoshaphat, preparing my heart to seek God; like Mary, loving God so much she birthed our Lord and Savior; like Daniel, able to commune with God all the time; like Job, patient under all circumstances; like Ruth, loyal above all to family; like Caleb and Joshua, refusing to be discouraged even in the face of greater numbers; like Joseph, able to turn away from all evil advances; like Gideon, advancing even though friends be few; like Aaron and Hur, constantly upholding the hands of our spiritual leaders; like Isaiah, consecrated to always do God's work; like John, leaning upon the example of the Master Teacher; like Andrew, ever striving to lead my family to a closer walk with Christ; like Priscilla, a pioneer for growing churches; like Stephen, manifesting a forgiving spirit toward all people; like the angels, proclaiming the message of peace and good will to all." (Taken from *Homiletics* Website, March 14, 2020)