

Teaching and Application

Big Idea: God reveals himself (often in testing and training) to prepare us to make him known to others.

Introductory Thoughts

This week many Christians around the world celebrated Ash Wednesday. It marks the beginning of the Lent season. *Not historically accurate* is [this song/production](#) as Pee-Wee Herman "explains" Ash Wednesday on Conan O'Brien back in 2011. [Not appropriate, but hilarious. Don't show.]

Also, at the district conf. this last week I heard Andre's story where he was saved (compelled to confess and repent and believe) when he heard — audibly — the voice of Jesus speaking to him. Per Andre, Jesus made himself known by saying "I am the God of your Grandmother [who was the only Christian in his family at the time]; I am Jesus." Remarkable testimony of the fact that God — through Jesus — is still interested in making himself known and calling people to himself. Just like in our Exodus story, just like in the New Testament, so also today!

Applicational Thoughts

Israel's testing in the wilderness (Exod 15:22–18:27). Testing/trials is chastening, but it's also instructive. Trust leads to obedience. Sabbath rest leads to experience of YHWH. Don't harden your hearts when you hear his voice (cf. Ps 95:7b-11; Heb 3:7-19). As Deut 8 makes clear, the testing was so they would learn YHWH's voice and ways and obey him. This obedience (and remembrance) will be helpful as they enter the land and become comfortable. *They are lessons learned for later, in times of comfort and security.* These things can cause God's people to forget him and to live independently of him.

Jesus' own testing in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13). What was the nature of the testing here? What lessons did Jesus learn, and us through him (and also Satan, as he tested Jesus)? Note that Jesus' own time of testing was after his baptism (Luke 3:21-22) and before he begins to proclaim the "Gospel of the Kingdom of God" (Luke 4:43). He learned that (1) true provision and sustenance comes from God and nowhere else (4:3-4, citing Deut 8:3, itself a reference to our passage today). And (2) God demands exclusive worship (4:5-8, citing Deut 6:13, itself a reference to the Exodus event), and (3) no one should test God (4:9-12, citing Deut 6:16, once more with reference to our passage today).

Our testing in the wilderness. As sojourners. What is the nature of the test? What tools are at our disposal as we're tested? What do our passages (Exod, Luke) suggest about how we can cope as we're being tested? What about Heb 3:7-19? It is important to understand that "testing" isn't always because of sin (i.e., God's "discipline" can be for training, not just cleansing). So don't assume (esp. in others!) that's what's at the root of testing. [E.g., *Diana Suderman in hospital reflecting on how others view her ongoing suffering.*]

The Apostle Paul notes the value of suffering in Rom 5:3-5 and gives his own testimony that he's learning these lessons in Phil 4:11-13. The value of suffering and training to bring about peace and contentment and even joy. This is in fact why James (1:2-4) can command people to rejoice in their testing!

Testing, covenant, Gospel. Note the missionary heart of God in Exod, from salvation out of slavery to testing in the wilderness to "gainful employment" as God's covenant people and proclaimers. The story arc is the same for us. As Paul makes clear in Eph 2:1-10, the pattern is the same. We have been saved graciously but then put to work on things that were planned long before we were around — i.e., so we can join God's people in proclaiming the Gospel! But from

Exod we're reminded that it's in obedience to God's covenant that YHWH is proclaimed. I.e., it's in our lives that the Gospel is proclaimed as much as in our words! "In training the Lord fashions a people who will obey him, and in so doing reflect his image faithfully in and throughout the world" (Blackburn, *The God Who Makes Himself Known*, 80). A further implication from this story is that God's people are made into the people who can effectively proclaim the Gospel by way of testing and suffering. I.e., this is how God trains his people.

Journey towards Holy Week

Lessons learned from Israel as they got to know YHWH on way to covenant with him (Exod 16–18). Obedience (not disobedience), simplicity (not hoarding), contentment (not grumbling), rest (not striving), trust (not testing). God is present with us and acts on our behalf. The word gets out. God is worshiped. (Aka seen for who he is and rightly praised for it). Cf., 1 Cor 10:1-13; James 1 (testing God, from God). ***These are things we can practice on our way to Holy Week (i.e., things to do in the Lent season).*** See my buddy Zack's church's [Lent devotional](#), for those who are interested. It's a wonderful and deep devotional walk through the Lent season that will give you plenty of practical ways you can put this stuff into practice.

Further Study and Discussion

- (1) What in this sermon and sermon text did you a.) find helpful, b.) find challenging, c.) find problematic, or d.) want to ask a question about?
- (2) What was the big idea, and what do you think God wants you to do about it? How will you be not just a hearer of the Word but a doer of it (James 1:22-27)?
- (3) Compare/contrast Israel's first wilderness journey *to* Sinai (Exod 15:22–18:27) with the journey *from* Sinai (Num 10:33–14:45). What similarities do you see? Why do you think God acts so differently in the two journeys? (Hint: the answer is Sinai [Exod 19:1–Num 10:10], but *why? What about it?*)
- (4) From Exod 15:22–18:27, try to sift through the story to find moments where you see (one or the other of): obedience/disobedience, simplicity/hoarding, contentment/grumbling, rest/striving, trust/testing.
- (5) What parallels can you draw between Israel's testing (Exod 15:22–18:27/Num 10:33–14:45), Jesus' testing (Luke 4:1-13)? What is similar? What is not similar?
- (6) Now read John 6. How does Jesus make use of our story in Exod 15:22–18:27/Num 10:33–14:45 to teach about himself. From this story, *who is Jesus and what should we do about it?*
- (7) How will you journey behind Jesus (with his people) on the way to Holy Week? How is the Holy Spirit prompting you? What are some practical (and practice-able) ways you can journey better with Jesus and his people on our march to Holy Week? (Hint: look at the alternatives in #4, above.)