

Good morning! For those of you that don't know me, my name is Matt Chesney and I'm the director of youth and outreach here at Eagle Ridge and it is my pleasure to be speaking with you this morning. If you're just joining us for the first time, we are on a year-long journey through the Bible in chronological order – and we have Bibles available to purchase that arrange the Scripture in this way for us and break it up into the different days to keep us on track. And if you haven't been with us, or haven't kept up with the reading.... Don't feel pressured to go back and read what you missed – just start with today and keep going with us and we go. And I'll even summarize briefly what you've missed:

God was and is the first missionary and the Bible is the story of God creating and then reaching out to people to be in relationship with them. God wants a family and wants a relationship with you. Now, we have been with Moses and the Israelites for the last 5 Sundays going through how God rescued his people from slavery in Egypt and brought them out in the wilderness on their way to the land that he has ready for them. Of course, along the way, God needs to teach them a bit and develop a relationship with them because many of them aren't very familiar with God. Additionally, God provides for all of their needs along the way.

Besides providing them freedom from slavery, and an all-powerful God to protect them – he provides them with food in the form of "manna" that falls from heaven every morning, Quail for meat to eat, and water from unlikely places in a desert. He provides a place for them to interact and for God to dwell among them

(called a tabernacle), he provides protection from their enemies, and even a way to be reconciled to Him when they make mistakes.

The point is... **God provides.**

Which brings us to Numbers 20-21 where we see some very interesting stories take place.

**There was no water for the people to drink at that place, so they rebelled against Moses and Aaron. The people blamed Moses and said, "If only we had died in the LORD's presence with our brothers! Why have you brought the congregation of the LORD's people into this wilderness to die, along with all our livestock? 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!"**

So the people are in distress. Even with all of the previous provision – even though they have been cared for throughout their journey – they become fearful that THIS time God won't provide. Which is so very human of them – because we do this all the time. We get so wrapped up in our own troubles and problems and how hard they seem that we forget (or somehow can't believe) that God will provide.

So Moses approaches God and asks for help and God once again provides. And this time he provides **water from an unexpected source.**

**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, and the LORD said to Moses, "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."

So Moses did as he was told. He took the staff from the place where it was kept before the LORD. 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?" 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.

Now, there is a lot we could unpack and discuss in those verses – especially relating to Moses' anger and disobedience. But that can be a sermon for another day. For right now, let's focus on gushing water pouring out of a ROCK! That is incredible. Not only is the source of the water so ridiculous in nature... but the AMOUNT of water that comes from the rock is insane. It says the entire community (that's thousands of people) AND their livestock drank their fill. And also probably filled up containers of water so they could carry it with them for the rest of the journey.

And this isn't any old water... It's not a mud puddle... or a cistern with stale water loaded with minerals and iron.. No, that's "dead" water. This is fresh-flowing, GUSHING, "living" water from an

unlimited source. This made a lasting impression on the people – an example of God's provision in a miraculous way.

So that when Jesus comes on the scene a thousand years later and he encounters a woman at a well – he is able to use this story as a backdrop to explain who he is. As he speaks with her he says:

Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water." ... Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life." John 4:10, 13-14 NLT

And Jesus is referring to himself. He is the living water. The fresh-flowing, gushing, living water from an unlimited source.

Just a few chapters later in John 7, Jesus is teaching and saying some pretty controversial stuff when he drops this bombshell:

On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, "Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.'" (When he said "living water," he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.) John 7:37-39

The living water is the Holy Spirit. The presence of God and the power that resurrected Jesus from the dead. When you put your faith in Jesus and follow Him in obedience as His disciple, the Holy

Spirit will fill you, bubble up in you, and overflow to others. It's because of the Living Water flowing through us – the Holy Spirit – that we can be transformed to be more and more like Jesus. And we can offer this living water as a source of life and refreshment to others who are desperately thirsty – not thirsty like the Israelites in the desert – but thirsty for truth, thirsty for meaning and life to the full – deep in their souls.

So, God provided. He provided gushing water for the Israelites – and living water for us – from an unexpected source. And in Numbers 21 he does it again... He provides **healing through a bronze snake.**

**Then the people of Israel set out from Mount Hor, taking the road to the Red Sea to go around the land of Edom. But the people grew impatient with the long journey, and they began to speak against God and Moses. "Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die here in the wilderness?" they complained. "There is nothing to eat here and nothing to drink. And we hate this horrible manna!" So the LORD sent poisonous snakes among the people, and many were bitten and died. Then the people came to Moses and cried out, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take away the snakes." So Moses prayed for the people. Then the LORD told him, "Make a replica of a poisonous snake and attach it to a pole. All who are bitten will live if they simply look at it!" So Moses made a snake out of bronze and attached it to a pole. Then anyone who was bitten by a snake could look at the bronze snake and be healed!**

Numbers 21:4-9

Ok, so listen, I understand that eating the same food for 40 years is probably not the most wonderful thing in the world... but you're eating! Daily! In a desert! And rejecting the provision God offers is not a good choice. So, they were punished... with venomous snakes... hmm, maybe they should have just said "thank you."

But God also provides the solution to this issue too. He tells Moses what to do: Put a replica of a snake on a pole and lift it up. Anyone who looks upon the snake will be healed.

Wow, that's pretty crazy. And maybe a little offensive... I mean... looking at an image of the thing that hurt you for healing? Weird.

But not unusual for God. He's in the habit of doing things in backwards ways.

1. He took a guy named Abraham who could have no children and said he would be the father of many nations.
2. He took a guy named Joseph who spent years in prison and elevated him to 2<sup>nd</sup> in command of Egypt so he could save God's people.
3. He took a guy named Moses who was supposed to die at birth AND had a speech impediment to challenge Pharaoh and lead God's people.

And we're going to continue to see God do the impossible through the unlikely as we continue through the Bible.

Now, in this situation, they are to look upon a snake for healing from snake bites. But why? Well, the author of the NIV commentary has a possible explanation. In confronting the bronze

snake for healing, the people needed to confront their own sin. In his words:

"That is precisely the point: By doing something that is humanly irrational, the people will show faith in the Lord's power and promise of healing, which is their only hope." Pg 681

Each person had to CHOOSE to look at the snake. You couldn't just be near it. No one could look on it on your behalf. This was an individual, personal choice paired with a cure.

Does this sound familiar? It should. Just in case it doesn't, maybe Jesus' own words will help:

No one has ever gone to heaven and returned. But the Son of Man has come down from heaven. **And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.** "For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. John 3:13-17

Everyone who looks on Jesus on the cross and believes in Him will have eternal life. Which sounds almost as ridiculous as looking at a bronze snake for healing from a snake bite. And Paul agrees:

The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God. 1 Corinthians 1:18

Because it isn't really the act of looking on the snake or looking at the cross that saves you. It is understanding the power that lies behind it and accepting that power into your life. And no one can do it for you. You can't just be around it your whole life. You have to make the choice and take action on your own.

In both of the stories we looked at today God was doing something big and bold in their lives. Yeah, he was providing for their physical needs for water and healing... but he was also giving them an opportunity to trust in his provision and to believe in Him. He wants the same for you. He wants you to experience the hope and healing that comes through Jesus. He wants you to be filled with living water – the Holy Spirit – who will transform you and overflow to others around you who desperately need it.

### Steps of Obedience

1. Start with doing what the Israelites didn't... **Practice gratitude.**

Not just the easy, fun things. Not only the material blessings. But remember the hard things that God has brought you through in the past and how he has provided for you and brought you to this point. Make a list, write it down!

Ukraine speaker story

2. **Take a concrete, authentic step of obedience.**

Listen, I'm sure that each and every one of you at some point in your life have had this sense that you need to DO something based upon a conviction that God gave you. It might have been



today, it might have been weeks ago. But you KNEW that you needed to make a change, or do something tangible with what you were convicted by. We give these steps of obedience at the end of almost all of our messages because we don't ever want this to be an "information dump" or a "good show" that you can walk away from and say "Wow, that was good. Can't wait for next week!" and then leave without making any real changes in your life.

If you haven't heard or sensed anything, ask the Holy Spirit to give you a nudge. Right now. If you've never taken that step of faith to ask Jesus to come into your life, maybe that's your nudge.

Are you thirsty for the living water that Jesus provides?

Do you long for the healing that only comes through Him?

Maybe you've "accepted Jesus," but since that moment nothing has really changed in how you live your life

Perhaps there's a very specific thing you know God wants you to do, and you've been resisting

Possibly your heart is burning inside you to do or be **something** for God, but you have no idea what that means

I'm going to ask you to make a public move. Do this with me right where you are sitting--

Closed fist → Grasping, holding on, keeping something for your own use and your own benefit

Open hands → Releasing, surrendering, submitting to the Lord

If you're living life with your fists clenched—How will you ever be able to give anything away to someone else?

How will you ever be able to receive any of the good things God has for you?

What are you holding onto?

What do you need to release?

What do you need to receive?

What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

You'll have time for this as we sing this last song

After service I want you to tell someone

If you are part of a bridge group, tell them

If you have someone who knows you and knows God, tell them

Or you can tell me (contact info available through the office)

Don't let this be something that disappears when you walk out of the building (or turn the livestream off)

Make it real by saying it out loud to someone who will encourage and support you and who will be there with you on your journey