

Exodus and Wilderness

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[0 : 00] So, this morning, let's start, if you have a Bible, if you don't have a Bible, it'll be helpful for you to have one, and there are some extras sitting in the bookshelf over there.

But let's start with Psalm 95 this morning. Psalm 95, in some Christian traditions, is prayed every morning as part of morning prayer, and it happens to fit really well with what we're looking at this morning.

So, which one did you say? Psalm 95. O come, let us sing to the Lord.

Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving. Let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise, for the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

In his hand are the depths of the earth. The heights of the mountains are his also. The sea is his, for he made it. And his hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down.

[1 : 09] Let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker. For he is our God. And we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massa in the wilderness, when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof that they had seen my work.

For forty years I loathed that generation and said, they are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways. Therefore I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest. This psalm sings praises to the God of Israel, who is the rock of their salvation.

And this morning we're going to be looking at the fundamental moment, the fundamental event of Israel's salvation in the Exodus. But then in the latter half of the psalm, you have this bit, today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts, as Israel did in the wilderness.

And we're going to be looking at the wilderness years as well, the time when Israel went astray in their heart and did not know God's ways.

[2 : 26] So, this summer, through the whole summer in this Sunday school class, we're looking at a sort of big, broad, thirty-thousand-foot view picture of the Old Testament, and especially the narrative of the Old Testament.

Because it's one big story. And sometimes we might know individual pieces of that story, but it's helpful for us to be able to put the whole thing together to see how Jesus is the climax of the whole story of the Old Testament.

And today, we're looking at Israel's exodus from Egypt and their time wandering in the wilderness before they enter the Promised Land.

And since, if you've been coming to the sermons, you would know that we are going through Exodus right now upstairs. So, we're going to, it's really going to be a thirty-thousand-foot view. Because if you come to the sermons, you will be getting a sort of verse-by-verse look at Exodus.

[3 : 41] So, I'm a handout. I have a very, it can't get any briefer than this, outline of the Torah, of the first five books of the Bible.

I put this on here just because we're going to be finishing up the narrative of the Torah this morning. We looked at Abraham's life last week, and that's all in the first half of Genesis.

And then today, we're looking at Exodus. And Numbers has some of the story of Israel in the wilderness. And then Leviticus and Deuteronomy, it doesn't have so much narrative in it.

It's mostly just legal codes. So, we're not really going to be looking at those books at all this summer. But first, talking about the Exodus from Egypt, where we left off last week, Israel is not in Egypt.

Abraham is still wandering in the land that God had promised to give to his offspring. So, I just put down a few sort of citations there if you want to chart out the story of Abraham's family getting down into Egypt.

[5 : 01] We talked about Abraham and Sarah being the parents of Isaac last week, the promised child, the child that God had promised to Abraham. And God's promises and blessing to Abraham that we talked about so much last week are reiterated to Isaac in Genesis 26.

And then they're reiterated to Jacob, the child of Isaac, in Genesis 32. So, we see this family line of promise, of blessing, emerging in Genesis.

Which is God bringing about and continuing his promise to Abraham that his offspring, his family, would be the means by which God would bless the whole world.

And that promise is reiterated to Abraham's children. Then there's the story of Jacob's child, Joseph, who was sold into Egypt as a slave.

Then God raises Joseph to prominence, saving the land from famine. That's about 10 chapters in Genesis that we're just totally, we're mentioning but not looking at.

[6 : 18] And then in this one, I think it might be helpful to look at really briefly. If we can turn to Genesis 45. So, starting in verse 4, this is Genesis 45.

Joseph is talking to his brothers years later after they had sold him into slavery, after Joseph rises to prominence in Egypt. So, starting, so Genesis 45, verse 4.

Joseph said to his brothers, come near to me, please. And they came near. And he said, I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here.

For God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years. And there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest.

And God sent me here before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to keep alive for you many survivors. So, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his house and ruler over the land of Egypt.

[7 : 34] Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord over all Egypt. Come down to me. Do not tarry. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen. And you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children and your flock and all that you have.

There I will provide for you. For there are yet five years of famine to come. So that you and your household and all that you have do not come into poverty. So, in this way, Israel ends up going down into Egypt.

And at first, it's not, they're not enslaved at first, right? This is a good thing for them to be going to Egypt. And Joseph even says God sent him there.

But just as God had told Abraham in Genesis 15, which I put on the page there, know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there.

And they will be afflicted for 400 years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve. And afterward, they shall come out with great possessions, just as God had assured Abraham.

[8 : 50] So it happens. A pharaoh, a new pharaoh comes up in the beginning of Exodus, who doesn't know Joseph's family.

And out of fear of that family that is increasing greatly, he enslaves them. And they are afflicted for 400 years, as God had told Abraham.

And like I said, it's because it's the sermon series upstairs. I have just a few notes here, like a really broad view of the book.

And on the second page, I have an outline of the book of Exodus, which might actually help you follow the sermons upstairs. You can place any particular sermon within the broader outline of the book.

But in short, the book of Exodus starts with God calling Moses and saving Israel from slavery in Egypt through Moses.

[9 : 55] Then there's this, God brings them to Sinai and makes a covenant with them and gives them some laws. That's where we are upstairs right now. Then Israel fails, breaches the covenant, worships the golden calf, but God renews, restores the covenant.

And even from this really, really broad outline of the book of Exodus, I think we can learn a lot about the life of faith just from that very basic structure of God saves Israel, God makes a covenant and gives them laws.

Israel fails miserably, worships the golden calf, even while Moses is up on the mountain receiving laws and talking to God. And then God restores the covenant.

I think from just that very broadest outline of the book, we can learn a lot about the life of faith. For one thing, just as God saved Israel from slavery in Egypt, God saves us, his people today, from a kind of slavery to sin and death.

Jesus says in the Gospel of John, and I put these on the handout, Jesus describes sin as almost a kind of addictive behavior.

[11 : 33] If you engage in it, and we all do, you become enslaved to it in a sense. I can, I can, how many times have I, has a word come out of my mouth, an unkind, cruel word come out of my mouth before I even realize it?

It's, it's, it's, it's as if I cannot help but do wrong to God and my neighbor. I, I am, in some sense, a slave to sin.

And, and Jesus says that is, that is our condition. But he, the Son, sets us free, and we are free indeed. Um, so, there is that kind of correspondence, um, that, that we see in the life of faith between the Exodus and, and, um, us today.

And then, this, this bit from Hebrews. Since, therefore, the children, uh, human beings, share in flesh and blood, the Son himself, likewise, partook of the same thing.

Becoming flesh and blood, that is. That through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil. And deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

[12 : 47] Um, there, there is a, a sense in which we are slaves of, of death and the fear of death. Uh, that, uh, the, the, the fear of death limits what we are willing and able to do.

Um, but Jesus, in defeating death, uh, frees us from that. To be able to serve him, uh, live for him, uh, and, and say with Paul, for me, to, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Whether I, whether I live or die ultimately is not the thing that matters, but whether I belong to Jesus is the thing that matters. Uh, and I want to be part of what he is doing in the world. Um, for, to, to be this conduit of blessing, uh, to the whole world.

Um, so just as God saved Israel from Egypt, so also Jesus saves us from, from a kind of, a kind of slaver. Um, and just as God saved Israel apart from anything they did beforehand, so also God saves us irrespective of what we've done.

Uh, the, the law is not given to Egypt, right? So that big, broad outline of the book of Exodus, God doesn't tell, uh, God doesn't tell Israel how to live, uh, giving them commands to live by, until after he saved them from Egypt.

[14 : 07] Um, and it, and it's the same, it's the same way for us. We don't, Israel didn't have to earn their, their freedom from Egypt in the same way we don't have to earn our, uh, relationship, our freedom with God.

Uh, by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Um, so you see what I'm doing here. I'm looking for these correspondences between, uh, the book of Exodus, and it's, it's big, broad outline, and the life of the Christian.

Um, because there is this, the, the, the, the big, broad outline of Exodus is a picture of, of salvation in Jesus. Um, and then just as God gave Israel his law at Mount Sinai, um, after, after saving them, God gives us direction on how to live.

Uh, God expects us to, to live in a certain way after he's, you know, saved us from this kind of slavery and, and brought us into a relationship with himself. Uh, just going on, right, uh, so the previous thing that I read was Ephesians 2, 8, and 9.

[15 : 22] Very next verse, uh, we are his workmanship, God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Uh, in the same way that Israel is expected to live in a certain way after God brings them out of slavery, so also God expects us to live in a certain way after, after God brings us into relationship with himself.

Um, and then just as God forgives Israel and restores his covenant with them, after they fail miserably in, in, in worship of the golden calf, so also God forgives our sin and restores our relationship with him when we genuinely turn back to him in, in, in faith.

Um, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Uh, so as, as, um, as we are, uh, going through the rest of the book of Exodus upstairs, I hope, I hope I'm not rehashing too much what, what our pastors have been saying in sermons so far.

Um, but as we go through the rest of the book of Exodus, uh, it can be helpful for us to look for ways that, uh, the story of Israel in, in the Exodus is, is our story too.

[16:47] Um, which we should expect if we are, as, as we were saying last week, if we are Abraham's offspring, uh, then we should expect the story of Abraham's offspring to be our story too. Um, if, if you, uh, if you know this word, the, the approach that I'm doing there is called typology.

If you've heard that word before, that's why I'm saying it just so you have something to, to grab onto. If you don't know that word, forget it. It doesn't really matter. It's a seminary word. Um, you don't, you don't need that to follow God.

Um, so that, that's a super, I, like I said, the, I feel like I'm doing violence to the text by skimming that briefly through it. But, um, I don't, I don't want to steal, steal anything from the pastors upstairs, uh, and, and sort of belabor the point.

Um, I want to spend most of our time on something we, we are not going to be talking about so much upstairs when we look through Exodus, and that's Israel's wilderness years. Um, but before we move on to that, uh, are there any thoughts, questions?

Um, I don't think you can do Exodus too much. I mean, I thought you could come back to it probably several times in your life and come back to it and find more.

[18:03] There's, there's a lot here for us. Um, you're fine. You can't talk to us. Amen.

All right. So, um, after Israel leaves Mount Sinai, uh, God sends them away, uh, into, into the land that he had promised Abraham all those years before.

Uh, we were looking last week in Genesis, uh, God promised Abraham, I'm going to give your offspring this land that you're wandering about in. Well, now God's doing it.

Uh, finally, after 400 years, God is, is taking Israel into this land. Um, and, it's, if we look, there's this verse in the beginning of Deuteronomy that tells us that it's only an 11 days journey.

Um, the second verse of Deuteronomy, it's only an 11 days journey from Mount Sinai to the edge of the land that God had promised to give to them. Uh, but it takes Israel 40 years to get there.

[19:14] Uh, and you think, what gives? Well, it's because Israel is once again disobedient. Uh, and, and this entire time, so most of Israel's time in the wilderness, uh, is in, uh, is recorded in the book of Numbers.

Um, in the, the Hebrew name for the book called Numbers. See, we call it Numbers because it begins with some census data and we think the whole book is just a bunch of numbers.

It's, it's not, uh, it's, it's a story and, and the Hebrew name for it is actually a lot better. It means in the wilderness, uh, which is really what the book is about. Um, so most of this, most of the story is in the book of Numbers.

Uh, and their whole time in the wilderness is characterized by disobedience. Uh, it didn't end with the golden calf. They grumble about lack of food and water. Uh, they grumble about, uh, the leadership of Moses and Aaron.

Um, and then later on in, in Numbers 25, they worship the pagan god Baal, uh, which comes up again and again in the rest of the Old Testament. Um, but I want to focus on one incident in particular, uh, in Numbers 13 and 14 that sort of captures, uh, the whole, um, that really captures the whole thing.

[20:29] It's, it's maybe the most striking incident of, uh, of Israel's disobedience in the wilderness. Um, and, once again, I think this shows us a great deal about, um, our life of faith.

Uh, and that's, and that's the lens I, I want to, uh, bring to it. Um, and it's, it's quite a lot of text, so that's why I left a lot of time for it. So let's, uh, look at Numbers chapter 13.

Um, um, so by this point, they've gone on that 11 day journey.

Israel has, uh, they're at the promised land. Um, and God tells Moses to send people into the land to check it out.

Um, so let's start in, in, I'll start reading in verse 17. Um, all right, since this is Numbers chapter 13, I'm going to start in verse 17.

[21:53] Great. All right. Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan and said to them, go up into the Negev and go up into the hill country and see what the land is and whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many and whether the land that they dwell in is good or bad and whether the cities that they dwell in are camps or strongholds and whether the land is rich or poor and whether there are trees in it or not.

Be of good courage and bring some of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes. So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob near Lebo Hamath.

They went up into the Negev and came to Hebron, Ahaman, Sheshai, and Talmi. The descendants of Anak were there. Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt. And they came to the valley of Eshkol and cut down from there a branch with a single cluster of grapes and they carried it on a pole between two of them. They also brought some pomegranates and figs. That place was called the valley of Eshkol because of the cluster that the people of Israel cut down from there.

At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land and they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness of Paran at Kadesh. They brought back word to them and to all the congregation and showed them the fruit of the land.

[23 : 23] They said to them, We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey and this is the fruit. However, the people who dwell in the land are strong and the cities are fortified and very large and besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there.

The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negev. The Hittites, the Jebusites and the Amorites dwell in the hill country and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the Jordan. But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, Let us go up at once and occupy it for we are well able to overcome it.

Then the men who had gone up with him said, We are not able to go up against the people for they are stronger than we are. So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out saying, The land through which we have gone to spy it out is a land that devours its inhabitants and all the people that we saw in it are of great height and there we saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak who come from the Nephilim and we seemed to ourselves like grass hoppers and so we seemed to them.

Then all the congregation raised a loud cry and the people wept that night and all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, Would that we had died in the land of Egypt or that we had died in this wilderness.

Why is the Lord bringing us into this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt? And they said to one another, Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt.

[24 : 55] Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the people of Israel. And Joshua, the son of Nun, and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, The land which we passed through to spy it out is an exceedingly good land.

If the Lord delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us. A land that flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the Lord and do not fear the people of the land for they are bread for us.

Their protection is removed from them and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them. Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones. But the glory of the Lord appeared at the tent of meeting to all the people of Israel.

And the Lord said to Moses, How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me despite all of the signs that I have done among them? I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they. But Moses said to the Lord, Then the Egyptians will hear of it. For you brought up this people in your might from among them. And they will tell the inhabitants of this land, They have heard that you, O Lord, are in the midst of this people.

[26 : 14] For you, O Lord, are seen face to face and your cloud stands over them and you go out before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Now if you kill this people as one man, then the nations who have heard your fame will say it is because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land that he swore to give them, that he has killed them in the wilderness.

And now please let the power of the Lord be great as you have promised, saying the Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation.

Please pardon the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people from Egypt until now. Then the Lord said, I have pardoned according to your word, but truly as I live and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord, none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers.

And none of those who despise me shall see it. But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me fully, I will bring into the land into which he went and his descendants shall possess it.

Now, since the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valleys, turn tomorrow and set out for the wilderness by way of the Red Sea. And then God repeats in verse 28, As I live, declares the Lord, what you have said in my hearing I will do to you.

[27 : 46] Your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness and of all your number listed in the census from 20 years old and upward who have grumbled against me, not one shall come into the land where I swore that I would make you dwell.

So, the spies go into the land, they're told to be of good courage, but they come back in fear. They bring a bad report and their fear goes viral and the people want to even stone them, Caleb and Joshua, with stones for having faith in God.

And God ends up saying, you ask to die in the wilderness and that's what's going to happen. It is a chilling narrative.

And it characterizes really Israel's entire time in the wilderness. God saves them from Egypt, makes this covenant relationship with them and yet they fail repeatedly again and again and again and they hear, even though they're on the cusp of the land of promise, the fulfillment of all these promises to Abraham 400 years earlier, even so, they refuse to go in out of fear, really.

[29 : 09] And, like I've been asking, I want to ask of this text, what does it show us about our life of faith now?

I think it's at least a few things. One is this, be of good courage. That's what Moses tells these spies right towards the very beginning.

Are we making our decisions out of fear or based on faith in what God has promised us in scripture? Israel's disobedience here, which excludes them from the land, excludes that entire generation, their disobedience emerges from fear.

So I think it's good for us to ask ourselves on occasion, what are you afraid of in life? Um, and I don't mean like spiders or snakes, you know, uh, or, uh, your closet when you leave it open and you're in bed and the lights are off.

That, that's something for me. I don't mean that. Um, I, I mean, I mean the big things. Uh, afraid of being alone. Um, and yet, Jesus has promised to be with you to the end of the age.

[30 : 34] church and, and he's given you a family and, and brothers and sisters in, in the church. All, all of us adopted it. Uh, uh, financial insecurity.

Um, you know, big, the big things, you know, um, the big things that shape how we, how we live our lives. Uh, what, what, what are we afraid of?

And, and how might these fears lead in the same way to rebellion against God just as, just as it leads Israel to rebellion against God here. Israel was afraid that if they went into this land, these tremendous, uh, tremendously strong people in the land would, uh, would destroy them.

And yet, they, they had seen God taking care of them, bringing them out of Egypt, and God had promised to give them the land. So, Caleb says, of course, if, if we, if we don't rebel against God, we'll certainly be able to go in.

Um, as a side note, one might wonder, you know, driving them out of the land, this is very violent. Uh, well, Nick will be, uh, telling us all about that this morning.

[31 : 50] Uh, uh, and if this is something that troubles you, come back next week because we're talking about the book of Joshua. Um, we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them, um, the spies say.

Uh, I, I think this shows us we need to, we need to understand ourselves and our circumstances not based on, on, uh, we need to interpret ourselves and our circumstances based on who God has revealed himself to be and what he says about us.

Uh, and not the other way around. Um, here, Israel looks at their circumstances and says, this is such a scary, disastrous situation.

We feel like grasshoppers. Therefore, uh, then, you know, they project that onto, um, the people in the land. If you look at the beginning of Joshua, actually, it's the other way, it's the other way around.

Uh, at the beginning of Joshua, I put the Joshua 2.11. Uh, the people in the land are actually really scared of Israel. Uh, it's, it's not that they seem like grasshoppers. Um, it's that they were actually really scared of them.

[33 : 00] Uh, yeah, I, I think, um, you know, it's only, it's only Joshua and Caleb who understood their, their situation and who they are in, in the Lord, uh, correctly.

Um, and so I think this, this text would have us ask ourselves, uh, is, is our sense of self in our, in our sense of our circumstances, uh, based on what God says about us?

Or is it overly inflated or overly deflated because of, uh, a fixation on self, a kind of prideful fixation on ourselves and what we're thinking and feeling?

Uh, God, you know, it, God made you in his very own image, uh, as we were talking about a few weeks ago. Uh, you are of inestimable value.

If you belong to Jesus, you, you are a, a, a brother or sister of the very son of God, right? Uh, there, there's, having a sense of self that is like, well, I am, I am worthless or I am nothing, uh, as, as so many of us sometimes fall into, uh, is not really grounded on, on the truth.

[34 : 21] It's not grounded on what God says about us. And if we have this sense of, I, I'm, I'm the man and I'm better than everyone around me, uh, well, no, you're a creature.

Uh, you're not God. You're, you're a creature. Um, God made you. Uh, you came from the dust and from the dust into the dust you will return. Uh, so that's, that's what I mean.

Are, are we, are we constructing our, are we understanding ourselves, um, in light of what God says about us or, or, uh, does it come just out of a, uh, a fixation on ourselves and our own feelings?

Um, then perhaps the most chilling line in this entire bit that, that I, that I read here, God says to Israel, what you have said and my hearing I will do to you.

Um, Israel cries out, if only we had died in Egypt or in this wilderness. And God says, okay, if that's what you want, this entire generation will die in this wilderness.

[35 : 29] Uh, ultimately, I think this teaches us that God gives us what we really want, either God or not God. Um, we see this dynamic in Romans chapter one.

Uh, there's this refrain of God saying, uh, he, he, Romans one describes, um, the pagan world that worships idols. Uh, and, and there's this refrain of God gave them up.

Um, they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore, God gave them up in the lust of their hearts to one period.

Uh, God ultimately gives us what we really want, whether God or not God. Uh, C.S. Lewis has this, has this great quote.

I actually, I put a citation for it, but I actually couldn't track it down yesterday. Um, so, forgive me.

Uh, it's either from somewhere in the great divorce or from near Christianity and I couldn't find it, but it's great.

[36 : 36] Uh, there are only two kinds of people in the end. Those who say to God, thy will be done and those to whom God says in the end, thy will be done.

Um, and so this week, will we choose to live for God or for lesser things? Uh, because God will say to us, uh, in the end, thy will be done and either it'll be, uh, our will to, to walk with Jesus and live for him and love him and be loved by him.

Uh, or, or, uh, for things that ultimately in the grand scheme of things don't, don't really matter, um, in comparison. Uh, in Numbers 13 and 14, what we just read takes us through a challenging aspect of that.

Israel chooses not God. Uh, but then there's this, uh, in, in Luke 11, um, this, this ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you.

Uh, and, and Jesus says, uh, if, if human parents, uh, like to give gifts to their children, how much more then will the heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?

[37 : 49] Right? So, take heart, right? If, if we want to, to know, God and, and know his spirit, he will give them to us.

Um, so it's, it's not just this, I'm not trying to just be super dour with, with this passage in Numbers 13 and 14. There's also this, a beautiful, amazing aspect of, if we want to be with God and know God and love God, then God says, yes, great.

Um, and, uh, this last bullet that I put on here, and there's more than this, surely, of what this can, passage can teach us about the life of faith.

Um, but God, God will accomplish his purposes for the church. Uh, God accomplished his purposes for Israel. Israel enters the land, ultimately.

This generation dies in the wilderness, wandering around for 40 years, but ultimately they enter the land, and we're going to be talking about that next week. Um, God had promised. God, God follows through on his promises.

[38 : 55] And God will follow through on his promises for the church. Nevertheless, an entire generation of Israelites excluded themselves, disqualified themselves, from, from enjoying God's purposes, uh, and from resting in the land.

Um, and in the same way, uh, we can disqualify and exclude ourselves from God's purposes for the church through faithless disobedience. Um, I, we started this morning looking at Psalm 95.

Uh, there's this bit in chapters, in Hebrews chapters three and four, I put a citation here. I'm not going to read it now, because it's really, it's, it's pretty dense, and it would take more than 10 minutes to really unpack it.

Um, well, that bit in Hebrews, uh, takes this, um, this time, this disobedience in the wilderness, and applies it to the church, and says, uh, that, um, he, he, he connects Israel's rest in the promised land, from which a whole generation of Israelites excluded themselves.

And he connects that to the Christians' heavenly rest, and says, uh, therefore strive to enter that rest, that, that you might not fall by the same sort of disobedience. Um, and I think there's more to it than just this, you know, heavenly rest thing.

[40 : 15] I, I don't want you to go away this morning and think, Alex is beating us over the head with a fear of hell or something. Um, because I, I think there's, there's even more to it.

Um, God is doing amazing things in the world. Uh, the gospel is bearing fruit and increasing in the whole world, Paul writes in Colossians, and, and how much more so today?

Paul's world was pretty small. Our world is much bigger. Uh, I, I'm reading a book right now, um, for a seminary class about, um, the role of, of the American church in the global mission of the church. And, and this author who has spent decades, uh, doing missionary work around the world, and working with missionaries and pastors around the world, is telling these incredible stories about what God is doing around the world, what he's seen God do around the world.

Uh, and, and it can be hard for us to, to realize, uh, sometimes in, in New Haven, uh, the whole global scope of what God is doing. Um, he, he talks about, uh, walking down a street in Nigeria and, and just hearing worship and praise of God booming in the streets.

[41 : 28] You walk down the streets of New Haven, you don't hear on, on a Sunday morning, uh, unless you're right on State Street, right outside this church, you don't hear worship on Sunday mornings. But, he talks about in Nigeria, uh, there, there, the, the, the gospel is going out and increasing so much, uh, that you just hear booming worship.

Of course, partly it's a PA system and speakers. Uh, but partly there's just so many people coming to, to know and love the Lord. Um, he, he talked to a, a pastor friend.

I, I'm not, I'm not going to go on and on and on, but, uh, this one I found really striking and challenging. He, he, he taught, he, he tells about a story. He was talking to a pastor friend of his in, in Nigeria. And, uh, he, he asked him how he, how he became a Christian.

He said, well, uh, God raised me from the dead by the hand of a missionary. And so then, then I became a Christian. I'm like, I'm reading this. I have to put the book down.

Like, do I believe that God is actually working like that? I, I don't know. That's, uh, that's, that's something challenging for me. But, uh, nevertheless, I can, I can say God is doing things around the world and not just around the world, but here in New Haven too.

[42 : 38] Um, uh, pastor Matt sermon a couple of weeks ago, uh, he was talking about all of these ways that, um, that people in this very congregation are, uh, working to, to care for and include, uh, the marginalized and, and the poor and the outcast in, in this city.

Uh, in the, the church is being the church here, here in New Haven. Um, and, and, and, and accomplishing what God wants for the church to be doing.

Uh, will we, through fear, uh, and a faithless disobedience exclude ourselves from the, the joy of participating in, what God is doing in, in the world and in New Haven?

Um, I, I think, I think that's, uh, I think that's a question that Israel's wilderness years would have us ask ourselves. Um, will we lift up our eyes to see what God is doing?

Uh, just like how Jesus says to his disciples in John four, lift up your eyes and see the fields are white with harvests. Uh, God is doing amazing things. Will, will we participate or will we through fear?

[43 : 55] Um, stand on the sidelines. Um, all right. Uh, that was much more pontificating this morning than, than I actually, um, so we have about five minutes.

Um, so are there any, uh, questions, comments, concerns? Um, okay.

Okay. Well, um, let, let us, God, you are the rock of our salvation and, you saved your people, Israel from Egypt and you have saved us from sin and death and have brought us into this relationship with you to know you and love you.

Um, um, Lord, help us to, um, to be a part of, of what you are doing, um, through your people.

Um, help us to, uh, put aside, um, fears and uncertainties, uh, about you. Um, and today when we go upstairs and hear your voice, um, keep us from hardening our hearts to your word, um, as it's being preached, um, but soften us, um, that we might, um, be receptive in knowing and loving you and in, in walking in, in the ways that you've, um, appointed for us to do those good works that you have prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

[45 : 50] Through Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.