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## Sermon Notes

**Term** – Spring 2020

**Series** – Guided by the Fire

**Gathering & Date** – 11.00 Livestream, 17 May

**Title** – What is that in your hand?

**Preacher** – Paul Langham

**Reading** – As we Journey with God's Old Testament people in an unknown season and an unfamiliar place, we're going to consider lessons from the most significant desert journey in scripture. You can read it the story in Exodus 12 – 40. **Our reading today** is Exodus 17:1-7

Today's reading is an account of God's provision ... of water (as chapter 16 was of his provision of food).

So why do the people respond as they do in v. 2? Perhaps they don't know God well enough to trust that what he has done once, he can do again. And what does that say about me when I react to my latest need in the same way?

How long is my memory of God's faithfulness?

When God asks Moses, 'What is that in your hand?' his shepherd's staff represented

- Failure, disappointment and loss: he'd been raised in unimaginable luxury and privilege in Pharaoh's household, but was now a shepherd – and didn't even own the sheep he was guarding
- poverty and lowliness as a shepherd: Egyptians despised shepherds (Genesis 46:34)

Moses' staff was a physical representation of all that had gone wrong with his life.

Yet God turned this symbol of failure into a symbol of power, authority and leadership (Exodus 14:10-16)

God is a redeemer ... not just of lost souls, but of lost dreams, of broken relationships, of life's regrets, of our failures and our disappointments

God is intent on redeeming even our failures, disappointments and losses – not simply neutralising them, but transforming them into areas of strength he can use for his kingdom purposes

### Questions –

Imagine God asking you the same question he asked Moses in Exodus 4:2 – 'What is that in your hand?' ... what answer would you give? In other words, what are you 'carrying'?

Is there anything you're carrying that represents failure, disappointment, regret or loss?

Do you believe that God doesn't simply want neutralise them, but to transform them into areas of strength he can use for his kingdom purposes?

If you find that hard to believe, how can you partner with him to build your faith for that, and to see that transformation come about?

This week, is there something you can share with your small community, or a fellow Christian, either an example of where God has done just that, or an area where you need him to intervene?

For reflection: **JESUS IN GETHSEMANE** (Matthew 26:36-46)

Jesus didn't want to die. However

*When his soul was overwhelmed, Jesus resolutely anchored himself in the Father's love. His starting point in prayer was "Abba, Father". He didn't say, "If you really cared for me you wouldn't make me go through this." The Father's love was non-negotiable. Pete Grieg – How to pray*

In agony and uncertainty Jesus prayed eight deeply challenging and provocative words: 'not what I will, but what you will' (v36).

To echo this difficult prayer, I have to trust that God's perspective is greater, and His plans are better, than my own. To truly pray, 'Your will be done', I need to offer Jesus the place of highest authority in my life and place myself into his hands, the most secure in all creation.

A member of the church family texted John 14:1 to Jackie just before the Gathering this week, adding "I believe this could be a word for the church today." I think she's right. That verse reads:

*'Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me.'*

However this strange season is affecting you, Jesus is ready and willing to redeem 'what is in our hands', whatever we're carrying of past hurt, disappointment, regret and failure. Ask the Holy Spirit to increase your capacity for trust this week.