Background

Exposition

22 Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water.

23 When they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter; therefore it was named Marah.

Was God leading the Israelites?

Two lessons from Exodus 13:17-22

1. Sometimes God’s mercy is concealed by adversity. (1 Cor 10:13)

2. God tests us to strengthen us and show us what’s in our heart. (Deut 8:2-4)

Three Discoveries:
   A) Following God is not easy
   B) Following God does not always make sense
   C) The true condition of our hearts

24 So the people grumbled at Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"

Three days earlier they were singing. Now they are grumbling.

The downward spiral of disappointment with God:

   Disappointment → Doubt → Despair → Disillusionment → Disdain

Warning: Hebrews 12:15
5 Types of Bitterness:

1. The bitterness of slavery (Ex 1:8-14)
2. The bitterness of trials (1Sam 1:8-11)
3. The bitterness of sin (Deut 29:16-18)
4. The bitterness of death (1 Sam 15:32-33)
5. The bitterness of God’s wrath (Lam 3:1-15)

25 Then he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree; and he threw it into the waters, and the waters became sweet.

Why a tree?

- John Calvin: “The Scriptures should be read with the aim of finding Christ in them. Whoever turns aside from this object, even though he wears himself out all his life in learning, he will never reach the knowledge of the truth.”
- Dallas Seminary: “We believe that all the Scriptures center about the Lord Jesus Christ in His person and work in His first and second coming, and hence that no portion, even of the Old Testament, is properly read, or understood, until it leads to Him.”
- God showed him a tree to remind us of another tree.
- 1 Peter 2:24 - “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.”

JEHOVAH RAPHA = The Lord Who Heals

Christ is the cure for our bitterness:

1. Christ conquers the bitterness of slavery (Col 2:13-15)
2. Christ transcends the bitterness of trials (Isa 53:4; Mt 11:28-30; 1 Pet 5:7)
3. Christ erases the bitterness of sin (Ps 103:11-12)
4. Christ overrules the bitterness of death (1 Cor 15:55)

27 Then they came to Elim where there were twelve springs of water and seventy date palms, and they camped there beside the waters.

Matthew Henry: “Though God may, for a time, order his people to encamp by the bitter waters of Marah, that shall not always be their lot. Let us not faint at tribulations.”