Sermon: **“When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter”** (Ex 13.17)

How short the story would have been had the journey to the Promised Land taken 40 days, not 40 years!

Why didn’t God allow this?
[1] Moses had to bring the people to where he met God – Mt Horeb (= Sinai?). It was there the Law was given.

[2] Ex 13.17**, “If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt”**. Philistines were renowned fighters, and rather than face them the Israelites might return to slavery in Egypt. What God did at Red Sea, surely he could have done something similar against the Philistines. So why didn’t he?

God intervenes in our lives – sometimes in obvious ways, sometimes in subtle ways. In the Red Sea story – there are obvious interventions – 2 pillars to guide them, the parting of the Red Sea. Through all this the People of God believed that God was with them.

Is there some point? Ultimately Israelites faced many enemies & difficulties, overcoming them. Why?

To make something useful out of metal it needs high temperatures and physical manipulating.

We are not too different. Through Exodus, God was forging the ex-slaves into a useful people. To do this they needed a lot of stress. The Red Sea was the first of many stresses. Note also at the border of Promised Land 10 spies’ worries overcame 2 spies’ hopes (Numbers 13-14). This proved the people were not yet ready. 40 years later, they were.

Sometimes we too need to go through the wringer; through hardship deeper faith is forged, and we become more useful to God. Remember that when times get tough for you…