

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2020

## The Third Sunday of Lent

Purple



### Collect

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

### Exodus 17:1-7 English Standard Version (ESV)

#### Water from the Rock

17<sup>1</sup> All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink.<sup>2</sup> Therefore the people quarrelled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.” And Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?”<sup>3</sup> But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?”<sup>4</sup> So Moses cried to the LORD, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.”<sup>5</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, “Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.<sup>6</sup> Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.” And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.<sup>7</sup> And he called the name of the place Massah<sup>[a]</sup> and Meribah,<sup>[b]</sup> because of the quarrelling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”

**Footnotes:** a. *Massah* means *testing*. b. *Meribah* means *quarrelling*.

**COMMENT:** This is another story of Israel’s continuing struggle to believe and follow God’s leading during their wandering in the wilderness. Moses comes into conflict with the Israelites because they have no water and want to return to Egypt where water was plentiful. Following God’s instructions, Moses makes water flow by striking a rock. The point of the story is that faithful living is obedience to God, not finding plentiful resources.

## **John 4:5-42** English Standard Version (ESV)

### **Jesus and the Woman of Samaria**

<sup>5</sup> So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup> Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>7</sup> A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." <sup>8</sup> (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) <sup>9</sup> The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) <sup>10</sup> Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." <sup>11</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?" <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." <sup>13</sup> Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again."<sup>[b]</sup> The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." <sup>15</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water." <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." <sup>17</sup> The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; <sup>18</sup> for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." <sup>19</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. <sup>22</sup> You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." <sup>25</sup> The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." <sup>26</sup> Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he." <sup>27</sup> Just then his disciples came back. They marvelled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" <sup>28</sup> So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, <sup>29</sup> "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" <sup>30</sup> They went out of the town and were coming to him. <sup>31</sup> Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." <sup>32</sup> But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." <sup>33</sup> So the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought him something to eat?"

<sup>34</sup> Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. <sup>35</sup> Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. <sup>36</sup> Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. <sup>37</sup> For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ <sup>38</sup> I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour.” <sup>39</sup> Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.” <sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup> And many more believed because of his word. <sup>42</sup> They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.”

**Footnotes:** a. That is, about noon. b. Greek *forever*.

**COMMENT:** Jesus’ conversation with a Samaritan woman is perhaps the most unusual of all those reported in the New Testament. John told of it to reinforce the theme of his gospel, and to reveal the spread of the Gospel beyond the Jewish Nation. The Samaritans had an affinity with the faith of Israel and accepted the Torah, but not the view that that Temple was the centre for Worship, but their Holy Mountain: Faith in Jesus is the source of living in relationship with God now and in the life beyond death. Here again as in Exodus 17 and Psalm 95 water has a symbolic meaning. It represents the life of the Spirit which comes through faith. In this instance it may also symbolise the water of baptism which initiates our faith relationship with God. The passage also reveals Jesus’ attitude to someone much married (she could have been a widow many times over) and now cohabitating – perhaps more relaxed than many a Christian!

**Psalm 95** *Venite, exultemus* Grail Psalter

**℟̥ O that today you would listen to his voice! ‘Harden not your hearts.’**

<sup>1</sup> Come, ring out our joy to the Lord;  
hail the rock who saves us.

<sup>2</sup> Let us come before him, giving thanks,  
with songs let us hail the Lord. **℟̥**

<sup>3</sup> A mighty God is the Lord,  
a great king above all gods.

<sup>4</sup> In his hand are the depths of the earth;  
the heights of the mountains are his.

<sup>5</sup> To him belongs the sea, for he made it  
and the dry land shaped by his hands. **℟̥**

<sup>6</sup> Come in; let us bow and bend low;  
let us kneel before the God who made us  
<sup>7</sup> for he is our God and we  
the people who belong to his pasture,  
the flock that is led by his hand.

**℟️ O that today you would listen to his voice! ‘Harden not your hearts.’**

O that today you would listen to his voice!

<sup>8</sup> “Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,  
as on that day at Massah in the desert

<sup>9</sup> when your fathers put me to the test;  
when they tried me, though they saw my work. ℟️

<sup>10</sup> For forty years I was wearied of these people  
and I said: ‘Their hearts are astray,  
these people do not know my ways.’

<sup>11</sup> Then I took an oath in my anger:  
‘Never shall they enter my rest.’ ” ℟️

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end. Amen.**

**COMMENT:** This is one of series of psalms which may have been sung by pilgrims as they approached the temple precincts. It recalls the steadfast providence of God in contrast to the faithless complaints of the Israelites related in the story from Exodus 17.

### **Short Preface**

And now we give you thanks because you give us the spirit of discipline, that we may triumph over evil and grow in grace, as we prepare to celebrate the paschal mystery with mind and heart renewed.

### **Post Communion**

Merciful Lord, grant your people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow you, the only God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### **Blessing**

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness, to deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow him; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**