

Going to the Well

Lenten Journey: Part 3 “Going to the Well”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – March 12, 2023

3rd Sunday in Lent

Readings: John 4:5-42

Reflection: Psalm 95

Greeting: Come, let us go to the house of our God. So that he may teach us his ways. And may we walk in God’s paths. Come, let us walk by the light of the Lord! (*Isaiah 2:3-5*)

Prayer: Lord, we ask for your guidance in these forty days. May you help us to prepare our hearts and lives to be transformed by your steadfast love. Be gracious to all who have strayed from your ways like lost sheep, and return us to the fold of your mercy. Help us as we journey with our Savior to know your truth and grace. May we be moved by your Spirit that we may join together to humbly worship you. We pray that you will strengthen us by faith that we may walk in your light and may share your good news with joyful and glad hearts as we celebrate our deliverance from slavery to sin and death through the sacrifice of your Son our Savior. And it is in Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Reflection: 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 the dry land, which his hands have formed. O come, let us worship and bow down; 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. O that today you would listen to his voice! Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, when your ancestors tested me and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work. For forty years I loathed that generation and said, “They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they do not regard my ways.” Therefore in my anger I swore, “They shall not enter my rest.” (Psalm 95 NRSV)*

We read the words of Psalm 95 and we hear of rejoicing in God’s presence. That the Lord calls us to be his people. That we should seek the Lord and follow him. Do you sing joyfully, celebrating God’s salvation? Do you share that joy with others? What are the words that you use when you sing God’s praises? How do you lift others up in prayer? How has your heart and life been changed because of Christ? How can you share Christ with others in this season of preparation?

Prayer: O God, help us to remember your great compassion for your people as shown to us through Jesus Christ our Lord. May you help us to prepare to have our hearts and lives be changed through your mercy and grace. May your steadfast love inspire and strengthen us in these forty days. It is with penitent and grateful hearts that we come before to share our joys and our concerns on this day. We ask that you lift us up in both our laughter and our tears so that we may know your compassion. May you bless us in both our celebrations and our sorrows so that we may know that you are always with us, and may we always be thankful for your faithfulness as shown through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture reading for today comes from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our reading for today comes from John chapter 4 verse 5 through verse 42.

So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) 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." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband,' for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you." Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" They left the city and were on their way to him. Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." So the disciples said to one another,

“Surely no one has brought him something to eat?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, ‘Four months more, then comes the harvest’? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.” Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.” So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. 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 truly the Savior of the world.” (John 4:5-42 NRSV)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

Today, we are going with Jesus to the well. And not just any well, but a well in a Samaritan city. We begin today’s reading with a worn-out Jesus stopping at a well. This well is near a plot of ground Jacob had given to Joseph, a shared heritage between the Israelites and Samaritans. We don’t know exactly when the two groups separated, but by the time we get to the well, they are two distinct peoples. The Samaritan woman comes to the well for water and Jesus asks her to give him a drink. She wants to know why he’s asking her, because this isn’t something that normally happens. She’s most likely surprised that he’s asking more than anything. Because as a Jewish man, he wouldn’t ask a Samaritan woman for a drink of water. He wouldn’t ask her for much of anything. But he tells her that if she knew who was asking that she would have asked him for living water instead. And we have another misunderstanding here, like we did last week with Nicodemus. She doesn’t take the figurative meaning but the literal one, and she wants to know how Jesus is going to draw this water. He doesn’t have a bucket and the well is deep. But Jesus tells her that everyone who drinks the water from the well is going to be thirsty again. But the water that he gives? It will gush up as a spring of eternal life. The woman declares that she would like that water. But I can’t help but hear sarcasm in her response. She wants the water, so she won’t be thirsty and have to lug her jar here to draw water.

It is here that the conversation takes a turn. Jesus tells her to go and call her husband. She answers that she has no husband. Jesus responds that she has had five husbands, and the one she’s with now isn’t her husband. That she has spoken truthfully. This gives her pause. And she replies that Jesus must be a prophet. So, she brings a difference between the Samaritans and the Jews to his attention. Her ancestors worshiped on the mountain, but the Jewish people claim that Jerusalem is the right place to worship. So, which is the right place? Jesus tells her that the time is coming where the Father won’t be worshiped on the mountain or in Jerusalem, but that the hour is coming when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. More than that, the hour is here. That God is spirit, so those who worship must worship in spirit and truth. Jesus is implying that there will no longer be just one place to worship, but that it is about the worshiper worshiping in spirit and truth. The Samaritan woman replies that she knows the Messiah is coming. The anointed, the chosen, the Christ is to come. Jesus replies that it is him, or as it can also be translated: I am.

This is an incredibly important moment in John. And this revelation is made to an incredibly odd choice of audience. This is the first time in John's Gospel that Jesus has publicly proclaimed to the Messiah. And the first person to hear it is a Samaritan woman. This up ends quite a few preconceived notions we might have had walking into this. She isn't a Jewish. The declaration isn't made to a man. Not to his followers. But to a Samaritan woman who has had five husbands and has come to the well for water. What does this tell us about Jesus? Jesus is choosing somebody that is unexpected. Jesus is revealing himself to someone that isn't powerful. To someone that is an outsider. And he brings a message of hope. The disciples come back and they are shocked at the fact that Jesus is even talking to this woman. But they keep their astonishment to themselves. The disciples try to get Jesus to eat, but he says that he is sustained by doing God's will. Where does the woman go? She leaves her jar and goes back to the city. There, she does something nobody else has done. She proclaims the good news of Jesus, the Christ. You might say that this woman is the first person to preach the gospel. Maybe not as a full-fledged believer, but as somebody who has heard good news, and wants to share it. Because of her testimony, others leave to go find out more about this man that she is speaking about.

They end up asking him to stay, and he does. They ask this Jewish teacher to remain in a Samaritan city. And John tells us that many people came to believe in him. All because of one woman's testimony. We finish our reading with a statement about how effective her ministry was. Because at first, they believed because of her word, and now they believe because they heard it for themselves. Now they too know this is the Savior. Because she proclaimed the good news, they found the Christ. It was her message, her witness that brought them there. Part of what makes this message so extraordinary is the way it upends expectations. One might assume that it is the disciples that will be the first to preach about Jesus as the Messiah. Instead, it is this woman making the first public proclamation of the Christ. We might think that Jesus telling her about her own life was the most extraordinary thing that happens. But I think it is the choice of this Samaritan woman who has not lived an easy life is given this great chance. That Jesus sees her as fit to share the message. To go and share the good news that the Messiah has come. And we can see how unexpected it was by the reaction the disciples have when they come back! But we see the hope that Jesus has given to these people. Jesus crosses the boundaries that society has put in place to proclaim God's love.

I think this is part of what we can apply to our own journey in this season of preparation. This idea that Christ comes in unexpected ways, bringing hope to the least expected. And as we continue to engage with Scripture in this season of preparation, I pray that we are able to look for God in unexpected places. That when we search the Scriptures, that we find new ways that God is revealed to us. That we encounter God in places we haven't seen before. And in that same spirit, when we look at the world that we may find God in places that we may not have looked before. That we see Christ where we may not have expected him. That we pray that the Holy Spirit will be with us to enlighten us and lead us so that we can worship God in spirit and truth wherever we are. That we may find God everywhere so that we can love God

everywhere. And that by discovering Christ in those unexpected places, that we prepare our hearts that much more for the unexpected grace that comes through Christ's death and resurrection. And may it open for us that spring of living water, that it may rise up in us so that we too may testify to the power that it has and offer it to those who can hear. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: God, you are with us even when we turn away from you. Guide us back into your loving arms. Judge us not by the perfection of our actions but show us mercy and love. We have strayed like lost sheep from your ways, failing both in what we have done and what we have failed to do. Bring us back into your fold that you may guide us and lead us in all things. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us and forgive us. May we walk in your love and trust your ways. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy upon you. May the Lord forgive all your sins and lift you up in love through Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the Holy Spirit keep you in life eternal. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Current Series – Lenten Journey

Our current series is a journey through Lent. Each week we have a story of Jesus that helps us as we prepare ourselves during Lent. As we travel through these forty days with Christ, we learn important lessons along the way.

February 26th – *To the Wilderness* – Matthew 3:13-4:17

March 5th – *Meeting by Night* – John 3:1-17

March 12th – *Going to the Well* – John 4:5-42

March 19th – *Seeing the Path* – John 9:1-41

March 26th – *Visiting Friends* – John 11:1-45

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Patti Corder and the Greenup	Ambulance Crew	Our Healthcare Workers	Eric Veach
Ed & Verna Titus	Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney
Tricia Adkins	Don Stewart	Ronnie Winstead	Lauren Stewart
Phyllis Gabel	Tom Finley	Laura Carlen	Rosie Chancellor
Chuck Hogan	Brittany Gilbert	Jackie Potter	Phil Hawickhorst
Ray Carr	Jane Williams	Alice Sherwood	Richard Durham
Kathy Hanks	Steve Carlen	Emily Blade	Tim Schnauz
Donna Carlen	Ernie Peters	Jess Shoot	Alberta Darling
Stanley Kiser	Corrine Howard	Stacy Janes	Don Gilmore
Shirley Jester	Connie Brown	Jim Irwin	Gary & Mary Winterrowd
Leo Smith	Sue & Bob Smyser	Larry Thompson	Evelyn Sue Icenogle
Greg Williams	Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte
Lavon Figgins	Janet Freeman		

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