

**Winchester, Eastleigh & Romsey Circuit**  
**SERVICE AT HOME – Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

prepared by the Revd Kate Cambridge

As we enter the third Sunday of Lent, you are invited to spend some time reflecting on your journey with God. Prepare your heart for worship as you reflect on these words from Psalm 42.1-2:

*'As a deer longs for flowing streams,  
so my soul longs for you, O God.  
My soul thirsts for God,  
for the living God.  
When shall I come and behold  
the face of God?'*

**A prayer of approach**

Living God, we come to you, recognising our need for your life-giving presence. As we worship today, through prayers, songs, readings and reflections, may we know that you are with us.

Open our hearts to your Spirit,  
Open our minds to your Word,  
Open our lives to be changed  
in our encounter with you. Amen.

**Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along**

[God who sets us on a journey](#)

God who sets us on a journey  
to discover, dream and grow,  
lead us as you led your people  
in the desert long ago;  
journey inward, journey outward,  
stir the spirit, stretch the mind,  
love for God and self and neighbour  
marks the way that Christ defined.

Exploration brings new insights,  
changes, choices we must face;  
give us wisdom in deciding,  
mindful always of your grace;  
should we stumble, lose our bearings,  
find it hard to know what's right,  
we regain our true direction  
focused on the Jesus light.

End our longing for the old days,  
grant the vision that we lack –  
once we've started on this journey  
there can be no turning back;  
let us travel light, discarding  
excess baggage from our past,  
cherish only what's essential,  
choosing treasure that will last.

When we set up camp and settle  
to avoid love's risk and pain,  
you disturb complacent comfort,  
pull the tent pegs up again;  
keep us travelling in the knowledge  
you are always at our side;  
give us courage for the journey,  
Christ our goal and Christ our guide.

Joy Dine (1937 – 2001) © Revd Mervyn Dine.  
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**Prayers of Adoration**

Living, loving, generous God,  
you are with us,  
you lead and guide us,  
you are our faithful friend  
and our constant companion.

Jesus, our source of light and hope,  
you are our friend and brother,  
Servant and King,  
Saviour and Lord,  
our guide and our goal.

Spirit of God, living water,  
you empower us and challenge us,  
you move in and through us,  
comforting our distress  
and disturbing our complacency.

Holy God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
we worship and adore you.  
Receive our praise, enliven our worship  
and be glorified in all that we say and do this day,  
in Christ's name we pray, **Amen.**

**Prayer of Confession**

Take a moment to come before God and ask forgiveness for all that separates you from his love and from his will for your life:

A prayer of confession from St Ambrose of Milan:  
O Lord, who has mercy upon all, take away from me my sins, and mercifully kindle in me the fire of Your Holy Spirit.

Take away from me the heart of stone,  
and give me a heart of flesh,  
a heart to love and adore You,  
a heart to delight in You,  
to follow and to enjoy You,  
for Christ's sake. **Amen.**

### **Introduction to the readings**

Our two readings today both talk about water. In our first reading, the Israelites are wandering in the desert and complaining against Moses because of their thirst and God shows him how to provide water. Then in our gospel reading, Jesus has an encounter with a woman at a well in Samaria and talks to her about living water.

**Read Exodus 17 v 1-7**

**Read John 4 v 5-42**

### **Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along**

#### [There is a Redeemer](#)

There is a Redeemer,  
Jesus, God's own Son,  
precious Lamb of God, Messiah  
Holy One.

Jesus my Redeemer,  
name above all names  
precious Lamb of God, Messiah  
O for sinners slain.

*Thank you, O my Father,  
for giving us your Son,  
and leaving your Spirit  
till the work on earth is done.*

When I stand in glory  
I will see his face,  
and there I'll serve my King forever  
in that holy place.

*Thank you, O my Father.....*

*Words and music: Melody Green and Keith Green.  
© 1982 Birdwing Music*

### **Reflection**

The story of Jesus and the woman at the well is a dramatic example of what can happen in an encounter with Jesus. Picture the image in your mind. It is a hot day and the sun is at its height. A man sits by a well. He is tired from his journey and it is clear that he has been travelling a long way. He is alone – but not for a long. A woman emerges from the town and makes her way towards the well. Stooping to draw water, she looks up, surprised, when the man addresses her. They are soon engaged in a dynamic conversation and before long all thought of drawing water has been forgotten.

The Hebrew Scriptures contain many significant stories of meetings at wells. Abraham's servant, seeking a wife for Isaac, met Rebekah at a well (Genesis 24). His son Jacob met his wife Rachel by a well (Genesis 29). Moses, when fleeing from Pharaoh, met seven sisters at a well, defended them and assisted them. He was then offered one of the sisters, Zipporah, in marriage (Exodus 2.15-22). So when Jesus met this unnamed woman at the well, the scene was set for a life changing relationship to begin. But this one would not end in marriage.

There are a number of interesting elements to this narrative. Living in a culture so vastly different from the ancient Mediterranean world, we might easily miss the 'scandal' in this story. Jesus lived in a world divided according to gender. Women had their places (the kitchen, the home) and men had theirs (outdoors, the fields, the gate, the market place). While the well was a common space, men and women wouldn't be there at the same time, with women visiting in the morning or evening. The fact that this woman visited at noon suggests that she was avoiding the other women, possibly shunned by them because of her lifestyle (v. 18).

Next we need to appreciate the scandal of a woman speaking to a strange man in public. For a man to speak to an unchaperoned woman in a public place was very suspicious. Jews did not

associate with Samaritans. No wonder the woman was surprised at Jesus' approach and when he asked her for a drink. On their return, Jesus' disciples were similarly astonished that he was speaking with a Samaritan woman (v. 27). Later tradition shows that Jews considered all Samaritan women permanently 'unclean', yet Jesus, a Jewish rabbi, had time for this woman.

*'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.'* (v. 10)

While we can live many days without food, it is impossible to live very long without water. The Jewish law, the Torah, was referred to by Jewish teachers as the 'gift of God.' In fact, about a century before Jesus, the Dead Sea Scrolls described Jewish law as the 'well of living waters.' Jesus challenged the woman that, if she knew her Scriptures and she knew who Jesus was, she would ask him for living water, a term used for springs of water to distinguish them from hoarded water, such as in the well. Water is also powerfully symbolic; in Jeremiah 2.13, God said, *'My people.....have rejected me, a source of living water.'* We later learn that living water symbolises the gift of the Spirit (7.37-39). It was this life giving relationship with God through Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, which Jesus offered.

Through this encounter with Jesus, we learn more about the life of this solitary woman. The 'scandal' continues when Jesus was given insight into her life – having had five husbands, more than was sanctioned by rabbinic custom, she was now living with a man who was not her husband.

Yet this woman, such an unlikely person to be talking with a Jewish rabbi, was led from suspicion to questioning, to a belief in Jesus as the long-awaited Saviour. Only once in the whole gospels, in this encounter, did Jesus outwardly declare himself to be the Messiah. That is truly remarkable – that he revealed himself fully to a

Samaritan, a woman, and one of disrepute – it was this unnamed woman who was used to point the way to Jesus, the Messiah, near the very start of John's gospel. Dropping her water jar in her haste, the woman was also one of the first missionaries, when she returned to the city and told the people about Jesus. *'Come and see a man who told be everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?'* (v. 29)

What a wonderful story of how Jesus breaks down barriers, challenges stereotypes and prejudice and welcomes all into a new relationship with God. As we journey through Lent, may we know once again the reality of meeting with Jesus and be filled once again with the Living Water. May God break down the barriers we put up to faith and challenge the ways in which we discriminate against others.

Only when we have a living faith for ourselves can we, like this unnamed woman, share our stories with others and invite them to this life changing encounter with themselves.

Before we continue in prayer, take a moment to reflect on the closing verses of this passage and pray God that might use you – us – to bring others to faith in Jesus too.

*'Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony.....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 Saviour of the world.'* (vv. 39-42)

### **Prayers of Intercession**

As we come to our intercessions, use these prayers to lead you in your own private prayers. I am particularly mindful of refugees and asylum seekers who make dangerous voyages across the water to find refuge. Let us pray for political policies that combine wisdom with justice and compassion. Just like the unnamed woman, so many people who seek sanctuary here are judged for their circumstances. What can be done to

change the narrative around migrants and to recognise their humanity?

Let us pray:

We pray for places around the world where there is no fresh water; for places that suffer constant drought, or where people have to walk miles to the nearest well.

**Water of life, quench us with your life-giving Spirit and bring hope.**

We pray for those on the margins of society because of their status, age, disability, background or race; those who seem to have no voice. Help us to hear their cries, to listen to their pleas. Help us to open our eyes and our ears.

**Water of life, quench us with your life-giving Spirit and bring hope.**

The Samaritan woman took a risk speaking to Jesus. We pray for all who take risks on a daily basis – in their jobs, for mere survival, to get food and water for their families; and for children involved in risky situations all over the world, trying to survive.

**Water of life, quench us with your life-giving Spirit and bring hope.**

We pray for those in our communities who need your water of life; those who are lonely, bereaved, sad, or have lost all hope. Bring them your comfort, joy and peace.

**Water of life, quench us with your life-giving Spirit and bring hope. Amen.**

*Prayer from rootsontheweb.com – originally published in 2020.*

### **The Lord's Prayer:**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the  
glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

### **Offering and Prayer of Dedication**

*If you give your offering through an envelope scheme or cash, please set it aside, and pray with those who give using Standing Orders.*

Gracious God, accept these gifts, and with them our lives, to be used in mission and service through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along (STF 248)**

[I heard the voice of Jesus say](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74kyfROS4q8>

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
"Come unto Me and rest;  
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down  
Thy head upon My breast."  
I came to Jesus as I was,  
Weary and worn and sad;  
I found in Him a resting place,  
And He has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
"Behold, I freely give  
The living water; thirsty one,  
Stoop down, and drink, and live."  
I came to Jesus, and I drank  
Of that life-giving stream;  
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,  
And now I live in Him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
"I am this dark world's Light;  
Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise,  
And all thy day be bright."  
I looked to Jesus, and I found  
In Him my Star, my Sun;  
And in that light of life I'll walk,  
Till travelling days are done.

Horatius N. Bonar (1808-1889)

### **Closing Blessing**

The almighty Father refresh you,  
The loving Saviour redeem you,  
The life-giving Spirit restore you;  
And the blessing of God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
Be with us all, evermore. Amen.

*Blessing from David Adams, 'Clouds and Glory' p. 51*

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