

BIBLE STUDY
March 9, 2020

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Exodus 17: 3-7

John 4: 5-42

Romans 5: 1-2, 5-8

1. Exodus 17: 3-7

- The word for desert and wilderness is the same in Hebrew. The wilderness is uncharted, undeveloped territory as opposed to the city or town that is developed and mapped out.
- The wilderness is God's territory because you have to depend on him in order to navigate it. There are no maps or GPS. The wilderness requires trust and courage to move forward into the future.
- The Israelites were always tempted to look back with nostalgia for the past. Even though the past was slavery, they idealized it and thought it was better than the unknown that they were experiencing.
- As the Israelites journeyed in the desert (wilderness) to the Promised Land, they met obstacles and challenges. They had no food or drink. They blamed Moses for bringing them out into the desert (wilderness) to die. They had plenty of food and drink in Egypt—they forget that they had no freedom.
- They were putting God to the test. Would he help them or not? Would he be faithful or not? Were his promises true or not?
- God instructs Moses to strike the rock with his staff—the same staff that he used to strike the Red Sea. Water from a rock? All things are possible with God. God makes a way if they would only trust him.
- Messiah means “the place of the test.” Meribah means “the place of strife, of quarreling.” They tested God and quarreled with him at that place.
- Psalm 95: Oh, that today you would hear his voice; Harden not your hearts as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the desert, where your fathers tempted me; they tested me though they had seen my works.”

2. John 4: 5-42

- Samaritans and Jews: After the northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians in 721 BC, many of those living there were deported. Foreigners moved in and took their place. Although they kept some of features of the Jewish religion, they mixed in other beliefs. The Jews felt that they had polluted the faith and that it was illegitimate. Even more, they set up a site for worship at Mount Gerazim as a rival temple to Jerusalem. Therefore, Jews had nothing to do with Samaritans.
- Jacob's Well: In Genesis 29: 1-14 Jacob in search of a wife from the family of Laban, his mother's brother, comes upon a well. From the shepherds there he learns the whereabouts of Laban. At the same time, Rachel approaches with the sheep to water them and Jacob rolls the stone back to provide her water. He introduces himself as her cousin and

she tells her father. The well was on land that Jacob gave his son Joseph. Samaritans believed that the land was handed down to them from Jacob through Joseph.

- Wells were the places where the patriarchs found wives. Jesus, the Divine Bridegroom, “woos” the Samaritan woman not for earthly marriage but for a relationship with God. The marriage relationship has always been a metaphor for God’s relationship with humanity.
- Jesus takes the longer and more dangerous route through Samaria to get to Jerusalem. He has a “divine appointment” to meet this woman. “Jesus had to pass through Samaria”=divine necessity. He needed to receive her faith.
- Jesus crosses two boundaries to draw out the woman’s faith: that of gender and of religion/ethnic separation. God cuts through obstacles to reach us.
- John’s Gospel always plays with double meanings. A person understands Jesus’ words on one level and Jesus leads them to understand them on another level. Jesus asks for a drink. He is thirsty not only for water but also for her faith. They play with the double meaning of physical water that satisfies one’s thirst for a limited time and spiritual “living” water that satisfies for eternity. The well is still water but Jesus promises living water, i.e. water of a spring that bubbles up and does need a bucket. He also means living water that gives the divine life of God to humans in baptism. The woman thinks he can provide another well which would make him greater than Jacob. In fact, he is greater than Jacob.
- Their conversation has reached an impasse. She must acknowledge the truth about the story of her life before she can draw closer to God. It is revealed that she has had a total of six husbands. Sometimes, it is presumed that she is a sinner. However, maybe this fact reveals the pain that she has experienced in broken relationships. Maybe they left her or they mistreated her. Whatever happened, God wants to make her whole and heal her. Acknowledgement of the truth is the key that opens the door to God for her. When we acknowledge what God has done for us and what he has brought us through, we can enter into a relationship with God.
- Worship in spirit and truth: More than which sanctuary has the claim to legitimacy, to worship in spirit is to have a personal relationship with God; to worship in truth is to enter into that relationship acknowledging the truth about ourselves—putting the pieces of the story of our life together.
- There has been a progression of the revelation of Jesus’ identity. A Jewish man>>>Sir>>>Prophet>>>Messiah>>>Savior of the world
- The disciples return from having bought food in the town and urge Jesus to eat. He is no longer hungry because his divine hunger and thirst for souls has been satisfied. The disciples are amazed that he is speaking with a woman. Jesus intimates that these boundaries must be crossed in order to bring the harvest of souls to God. We do whatever is necessary to bring a person to faith in God.

- The woman gives testimony about Jesus. He told her everything she ever did. He helped her make sense of the story of her life. Others will believe when they hear our testimony. We cannot keep what God has done for us to ourselves. It is meant to be shared. Others will benefit. They will come to understand the story of their lives.
- Upon their invitation, Jesus stays with the townspeople for two days. During this time they come to know him for themselves. They no longer depend of her testimony but have their own experience of him. When we are young, people tell us about God and what we should believe. There comes a time when we have to experience Jesus for ourselves and make faith in him our own.

3. **Romans 5: 1-2, 5-8**

- Paul works with three “trinities:” past, present, future; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; faith, hope and love.
- Because of what God did through Jesus in the past (died and rose from the dead), in the present we have been justified by faith=put into right relationship with God; and also in the present we have access to grace. In the future this will be made perfect in the glory of God. Our hope points to the future fulfillment of God’s promise. Hope does not disappoint. If God said it, he will do it.
- God the Father has poured his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit because Christ died for us when we were still sinners. The action of the Trinity.
- Faith in Jesus gives us a right relationship with God, i.e. peace with God. Hope points to what God has promised us, the perfect fulfillment in heaven. Hope can be trusted. Love keeps us in right relationship with God and with each other. Just as God gave his Son for us when we were sinners, we give ourselves to one another even if sinners. This proves love.