**Weekend of Sunday, March 12, 2022**

**3rd Sunday in Lent/Year A**

**First Reading: Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7**

**Second Reading: Romans 5:12-19**

**Gospel Reading: John 4:5-42**

***“Speaking the Truth in Love”***

**Theme**

**Texts:**

**First Reading: Exodus 17:1-7**

*Because the thirsty Israelites quarreled with Moses and put God to the test, Moses cried out in desperation to God. God commanded Moses to strike the rock to provide water for the people. The doubt-filled question—“Is the Lord among us or not?”—received a very positive answer.*

1From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. 2The people quarreled with Moses, and said, “Give us water to drink.” Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?” 3But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?” 4So Moses cried out to the Lord, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.” 5The Lord said to Moses, “Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.” Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

**Second Reading: Romans 5:1-11**

*Though we often hear that God helps those who help themselves, here Paul tells us that through Jesus’ death God helps utterly helpless sinners. Since we who had been enemies are reconciled to God in the cross, we now live in hope for our final salvation.*

1Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. 3And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.
 6For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. 8But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. 9Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. 10For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. 11But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

**Gospel: John 4:5-42**

*Jesus defies convention to engage a Samaritan woman in conversation. Her testimony, in turn, leads many others to faith.*

5[Jesus] came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.6Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.
 7A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” 8(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) 9The 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.) 10Jesus 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.” 11The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? 12Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?” 13Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14but 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.” 15The 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.”
 16Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come back.” 17The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; 18for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!” 19The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. 20Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.” 21Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23But 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. 24God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” 25The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” 26Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”
 27Just 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?” 28Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, 29“Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” 30They left the city and were on their way to him.
 31Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, “Rabbi, eat something.” 32But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” 33So the disciples said to one another, “Surely no one has brought him something to eat?” 34Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. 35Do 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. 36The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. 37For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ 38I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”
 39Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.” 40So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. 41And many more believed because of his word. 42They 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.”

**Sermon**

If you recall, God told David, the king of the United Kingdom of Israel, that there would always be a descendent of David on the throne of Israel and that the Jerusalem Temple was the only appropriate place to worship God. But then, when the United Kingdom of Israel split, into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, the kings of Israel who were not descendants of David, didn’t want their people to go down to Jerusalem to worship and make a sacrifice, so they created their own place of worship on Mt. Gerizim. This displeased the Lord and the Lord refused to bless them, and sent prophets to them to get them to change their ways and return to orthodox worship. From that point on, Jews considered those who worshiped on Mt. Gerizim ritually unclean.

By the time of the Gospel Reading, the early first century, the remnant of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, who had been through the Babylonian diaspora and returned, are known as Samaritans because they were of the Roman territory, Samaria, in the same way that the Jews are known because they were of the Roman territory, Judah.

MAP

According to the Gospel of John, Jesus called his disciples, went to Cana for a wedding, then went to Jerusalem for the Passover and cleared the Temple courts of the merchants and money changers, encountered Nicodemus, and then went out into the Judean countryside. Jesus had been noticed by the Pharisees so he left Judea and was making his way back up to Galilee. However, Samaria was between Judea and Galilee, and so, as Jesus passed through Samaria, he stopped by a well near the village of Sychar for a rest while his disciples went for food. And that is when he encountered the Samaritan woman at the well; a woman who we learn had a checkered past.

As you heard, Jesus initiated a conversation with the woman, and while we have all heard sermons on the dialogue between Jesus and the woman, I want to go a different direction this time around.

In this encounter, Jesus teaches us several important lessons about faith and humanity.

First, this story reminds us that we are all equal in the eyes of God. The woman was a Samaritan, a group of people that the Jews considered unclean. But Jesus saw her as a human being in need of redemption and he treated her with kindness and respect. He broke down the barriers of race and religion that separated them and offered her “living water,” a symbol of eternal life, but that was lost on the woman. She just heard water that required no hauling and she just didn’t want to haul water in the heat of the day anymore. And notice that Jesus offered the woman “living water” *before* the conversation got complicated by her history.

So notice that the conversation Jesus initiated began with redemption not condemnation. Without judgment, without prejudice, Jesus offered her his best gift. That opened the door for the honest conversation that followed.

Second, this passage teaches us about the power of truth. The woman was living in sin, but Jesus did not judge her or condemn her. Instead, he spoke the truth to her gently and lovingly, and as a result, she was able to recognize her own need for redemption, and was able to receive his ministry, and turn to him in faith.

I have found this to be true in my own life and ministry. People are well acquainted with their own sinfulness, and by the time they come to me with it, they feel terrible about it, and while they might expect judgment, upon hearing their confession and more often than not, *their own* plan for repentance, I bring the grace of God. There is much relief in the room, and they leave energized to live their redeemed life. This is what Jesus has done with the Samaritan woman.

How are you doing with this? Do you remember times in your life when someone sought you out to help them ease the pain of something in their life? I hope and trust you delivered grace because that is what your Lord would do.

Or maybe you were the one seeking relief from a burden. I hope you were met with the non-judgmental compassion that Jesus delivered. If that is how you were treated, do you remember how good it felt to get that burden off your chest? Then maybe you can relate to the woman in this story.

Third and finally, this passage reminds us of the importance of sharing our faith with others. If you ever came to me and heard me deliver words of grace, I undoubtedly told you that I am merely a vessel used to pour out those words of grace given by God revealed in Jesus Christ. But it's not just my vocation. I am a true believer, because I have to be – because without the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ, I would be lost. I too, need redemption. And if faith I believe that I have received it. And I am only too happy and willing to tell you that. I hope you went away praising God for God's love, grace, and mercy. And I further hope you went away telling someone about what God in Christ has done for you. The Samaritan woman went back to her village and told the people about Jesus. She became a witness to the truth and many came to believe in him because of her testimony.

**Raisin’ the Bar Challenge**

Friends, I think it is possible to relate to Jesus and the Samaritan woman. We are like the woman at the well. We are all in need of redemption, and we all have the opportunity to receive it through Jesus. But we all have the opportunity to be like Jesus too. And as awesome as that responsibility sounds, we can do it when we:

* set aside our desire to be judgmental;
* let the other talk without telling them what to do;
* and offer words of grace given by God revealed in Jesus Christ.

This is speaking the truth in love.

Let us follow Jesus’s example and treat others with kindness and respect, speaking the truth to them in love. Let us also be bold in sharing our faith with others, just as the woman at the well did, and be ready to be a witness for Jesus Christ.

May God's love, grace, and truth guide us as we strive to become more like Jesus every day.

**Prayer**

Lord God, we are most certainly your thirsty people. We long to be drink from your well of "living water." Satisfy our thirsty souls with your love, grace, and mercy.

Lord God, we are most certainly your thirsty people. Thirsty to hear your words of truth delivered in love. Satisfy our thirst souls with words that are speak truth in love.

Lord God, we are most certainly your thirsty people. Give us a thirst to bear witness to your your words of truth delivered in love Amen