

the water that I shall give will turn into a spring inside him, welling up to eternal life.'

'Sir,' said the woman, 'give me some of that water, so that I may never get thirsty and never have to come here again to draw water. I see you are a prophet, sir' said the woman. 'Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, while you say that Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.' Jesus said:

'Believe me, woman, 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 comes from the Jews. But the hour will come – in fact it is here already – when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth:

that is the kind of worshipper the Father wants.

God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth.'

The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah – that is, Christ – is coming; and when he comes he will tell us everything.' 'I who am speaking to you,' said Jesus 'I am he.'

Many Samaritans of that town had believed in him on the strength of the woman's testimony when she said, 'He told me all I have ever done,' so, when the Samaritans came up to him, they begged him to stay with them. He stayed for two days, and when he spoke to them many more came to believe; and they said to the woman, 'Now we no longer believe because of what you told us; we have heard him ourselves and we know that he really is the saviour of the world.'

#### ■ The Gospel of the Lord.

*Longer form 4:5-42*

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# Reflections on the Gospel



THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT / A

15 MARCH 2020

## LIVING WATER

Weary from his journey, Jesus requests a Samaritan woman to give him a drink from the water she has drawn from the well. When she expresses her surprise at this breach of the cultural and ethnic barrier between Jews and Samaritans, Jesus begins to convince her that he has a far greater gift to give her: not the inert water of a well but 'living water', the kind of water that gushes up continually from a spring.

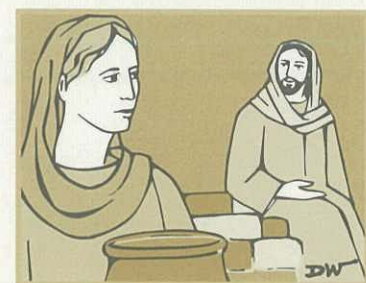
What Jesus is referring to in this symbolic way is the gift of the Spirit.

The woman half grasps his meaning but can go no further. Like all who reach a certain stage in the spiritual life, her knowledge of Jesus cannot go forward until the truth of her own life has been owned and set on the way to healing. That is why Jesus tells her, 'Go, call your husband'.

Jesus' knowledge of her personal life leads the woman to recognise him as a prophet. So she brings up the subject of worship, a key matter of dispute between Jews and her own people.

Jesus goes on to speak of a 'worship' transcending these divisions: a worship of God from hearts transformed by the Spirit of truth, the kind of worship to which Jesus is gently leading her.

Later, the woman will exclaim to her townfolk 'Come and see a man who has told me the story of my life'. The encounter with



Jesus has not only brought meaning to her life. It has made her a missionary to her people, transcending social and ethnic divisions.

**Brendan Byrne, SJ**

## FIRST READING

Ex 17:3-7

**A reading from the book of Exodus**

*Give us water to drink.*

Tormented by thirst, the people complained against Moses. 'Why did you bring us out of Egypt?' they said. 'Was it so that I should die of thirst, my children too, and my cattle?' Moses appealed to the Lord. 'How am I to deal with this people?' he said. 'A little more and they will stone me!' The Lord said to Moses, 'Take with you some of the elders of Israel and move on to the forefront of the people; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the river, and go. I shall be standing before you there on the rock, at Horeb. You must strike the rock, and water will flow from it for the people to drink.' This is what Moses did, in the sight of the elders of Israel. The place was named Massah and Meribah because of the grumbling of the sons of Israel and because they put the Lord to the test by saying, 'Is the Lord with us, or not?'

#### ■ The word of the Lord.

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 94:1-2, 6-9. R. v. 8

**R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**

1. Come, ring out our joy to the Lord; / hail the rock who saves us. / Let us come before him, giving thanks, / with songs let us hail the Lord. **R.**
2. Come in; let us bow and bend low; / let us kneel before the God who made us / for he is our God and we / the people who belong to his pasture, / the flock that is led by his hand. **R.**
3. O that today you would listen to his voice! / 'Harden not your hearts as at Meribah, / as on that day at Massah in the desert / when your fathers put me to the test; / when they tried me, though they saw my work.' **R.**

## SECOND READING

Rom 5:1-2, 5-8

**A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans**

*The love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.*

Through our Lord Jesus Christ by faith we are judged righteous and at peace with God, since it is by faith and through Jesus that we have entered this state of grace in which we can boast about looking forward to God's glory. This hope

is not deceptive, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given us. We were still helpless when at his appointed moment Christ died for sinful men. It is not easy to die even for a good man – though of course for someone really worthy, a man might be prepared to die – but what proves that God loves us is that Christ died for us while we were still sinners.

#### ■ The word of the Lord.

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

cf. Jn 4:42, 15

**Glory to you, Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ! / Lord, you are truly the Saviour of the world; / give me living water, that I may never thirst again. / Glory to you, Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ!**

## GOSPEL

Jn 4:4-5, 19-26, 39-42

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.**

*The water that I shall give will turn into a spring of eternal life.*

Jesus came to the Samaritan town called Sychar, near the land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well is there and Jesus, tired by the journey, sat straight down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.' His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, 'What? You are a Jew and you ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink?' – Jews, in fact, do not associate with Samaritans. Jesus replied:

'If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you:

Give me a drink, you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water.'

'You have no bucket, sir,' she answered 'and the well is deep: how could you get this living water? Are you a greater man than our father Jacob who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his sons and his cattle?' Jesus replied:

'Whoever drinks this water will get thirsty again; but anyone who drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again: