

March 8, 2026 – Third Sunday of Lent

**Welcome & Announcements**

**Creation Connection** How will we repent and change our ways as stewards of creation in the face of the temptation to stockpile resources for our individual needs, forgetting that God's plan is that we will have enough only when all is shared?

**Lighting of the Christ Candle**

L: We light this candle to remind ourselves of the light of Christ that is within and among us. (*the candle is lit*)

**All: Praise be to God, who spoke Light into the world, who sends Light to live among us, who brings the Light of new dawns. Amen!**

**Prayer for Illumination** Holy God, reveal your presence to us this day as we journey this path with your Son. Through all of life's trials and tribulations your Word sustains us for the journey ahead. Send your Spirit upon us that we might listen, discern, and take heart. Be near us this day and may your Word with us stay and dwell with us forever. Amen.

**Gathering Hymn** *I Heard the Voice of Jesus*, VU # 626

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
"Come unto me and rest;  
lay down, O weary one, lay down  
your 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 with him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
"I am this dark world's light;  
look unto me, your morn shall rise,  
and all your 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.

**Call to Worship**

L: We come to you, O God, to thank you for what is good.

**P: We come to you, O God, to cry out for what is wrong.**

L: We come to you, O God, to ask for help and restoration.

**P: We come to you, O God, with aching hearts and glad souls.**

**All: Let us worship God.**

**Ministry of Music** *Medley of the Cross*

**Children's Ministry** Water from a rock or a well?

**The Lord's Prayer** (*spoken*)

*Children leave for Sunday School*

**Offering Invitation & Prayer** We live in a world who thirsts - for justice, for compassion, for love. We are invited to share our gifts with faith that they will serve as living water: quenching thirst, nurturing growth, healing the world. Let us offer our gifts for the work of this congregation, and nationally and globally through Mission and Service.

Like the water from the rock that Moses struck in the wilderness, O God, let these gifts spill out and nourish your people. May our generosity be a blessing to both friends and strangers—to all who may be struggling in their own wilderness. We offer ourselves and these gifts with faithful hearts, sustained with your abiding love. Amen

**Scripture Readings:**

*Exodus 17: 1-7*

The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink."

Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the Lord to the test?"

But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?"

Then Moses cried out to the Lord, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me."

The Lord answered Moses, "Go out in front of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the Lord saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

*Massah means testing and Meribah means quarrelling: Moses purpose??*

**Responsive Psalm 95** VU # 814

**Sung Refrain:**

**Come, let us bow down and worship,  
Let us kneel before God our maker.**

L: O come, let us sing to God,

**P: Let us shout with joy to the rock of our salvation.**

L: Let us come into God's presence with thanksgiving;

**P: Let us joyously shout to God with songs of praise.**

### **Sung Refrain**

L: For you are a great God,

**P: High sovereign above all gods.**

L: In your hand are the depths of the earth,

**P: To you belong the heights of the mountains.**

L: The sea is yours, for you made it,

**P: Your hands also formed the dry land.**

L: You are indeed our God,

**P: We are your people, the flock that you shepherd.**

### **Sung Refrain**

**P: O that today you would listen to God's voice, "Do not harden your hearts as at Meribah, as on that day at Massah in the wilderness, when your forbears tried me and put me to the test. Though they had not seen my works. Forty years I loathed that generation, and said, 'They are a people whose hearts are perverse, for they give no heed to my ways.'" Then, I vowed in my anger: they shall not enter my rest."**

### **Sung Refrain**

#### John 4: 5-42

So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?" Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

"I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

"Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you - I am he."

Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him. Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something." But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"

"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labour."

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words

many more became believers. They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world."

**Hymn** *Be Thou My Vision*, VU # 642

Be thou my vision, O joy of my heart; naught be all else to me, save that thou art, thou my best thought by day or by night, waking or sleeping thy presence my light.	Be thou my wisdom, my calm in all strife; I ever with thee and thou in my life. Thou loving parent; thy child may I be, thou in me dwelling and I one with thee.	Be thou my battle shield, sword for the fight; Be thou my dignity, thou my delight; thou my soul's shelter, thou my high tower, Raise thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.	Riches I heed not, nor vain, earthly praise; thou mine inheritance, now and always; thou and thou only, the first in my heart, great God of heaven, my treasure thou art!	Great God of heaven, after victory won, may I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's sun! Heart of my own heart, whatever befall, still be my vision, O Ruler of all.
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**Message:** The Samaritan Woman at the Well

In our reading from the Gospel of John today, Jesus has just left Judea, where he and his disciples had been experiencing amazing success in spreading their message and in baptizing people, and begun his way home to Galilee. Their fishing for men, for new believers, had been relatively easy and straightforward, so Jesus likely to move on to more challenging situations, where the fish would be harder to reel in. This journey will take him through Samaria, the home of the Samaritans. I delved deep into the history of the Samaritans in preparing for this sermon, and learned a great deal, which I will be sharing with you now, don't worry - just the Reader's Digest form.

At some point after the death of King Solomon, the always-feuding tribes of Israel were separated into the north and south. The Samaritans were Jews who were forcibly resettled by the Israelites, with their capital city being in Jerusalem, then making Samaria their capital, the Kingdom of Israel. Jewish people considered the Samaritans ethnically and religiously unclean—and the Samaritans likewise resented and despised their Jewish cousins.

Does this process sound at all familiar – it certainly provides a fascinating background to the politics of the region today, given that the Samaritans are the ancestors of today's Palestinian people. (All of this occurred centuries before the advent of Islam.) We already know, from the story of the Good Samaritan, of Israelites dislike and disrespect of the Samaritans. Jesus's path takes him through the town of Sychar, in Samaria, which can not at all be considered an accident, but creating the scene for one of Jesus' most important conversations and conversions of others.

Jesus, tired by his travels, stops to rest at noon, at the hottest time of the day when all regular people would be resting in the shade at home, a time also when only those unwelcome at the communal well would dare to come to refresh themselves and their supply of life's essential, water. Jesus asks her for a drink, thereby disobeying common Jewish practice – the avoidance, at all costs of being contaminated by dealing with one of these 'others.' Her reaction show how unusual his request is.

Jesus' referring to Living Waters puzzles the woman, and he goes on to say that this ancient well, established by Jacob, in insufficient, as its water will only physically quench one's thirst for a short while. But those who drink of the waters which Jesus offers "will never be thirsty again." They again engage in some fascinating verbal jousting, when she challenges Jesus to provide this water, and he then brings the subject of her husbands into the discussion. Jesus knows everything about her, it seems, and she suddenly calls him a prophet. As He often does, Jesus is using metaphors to represent things of the spirit and the heart. Water is indeed life-sustaining, but in innumerable ways, which she will soon come to appreciate, as will we.

The Samaritan woman protests that her people have been given this mountain, Mount Gerizim, from which to worship God, while Jesus replies that her faith, and the traditional Jewish faith and practices have now become insufficient to truly worship God, and that he himself in a active, living part of God's lineage: a new Theology of worship: God = Father, Holy Spirit, Son/Messiah, the Holy Trinity. This is the very first time when Jesus uses the phrase "I am!" "I am the Messiah for whom people have been waiting." "I am He, the one who is speaking to you."

The disciples, who have now caught up to Jesus, are stunned into silence by seeing Jesus talking to a woman, alone, let alone a Samaritan woman. She responds, as do so many who encounter Jesus, simply and immediately is transformed, as transfigured, and leave immediately to summon them to hear,

"He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers.

They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world."

God's Good News, as delivered to humanity through the person of Jesus Christ, has this much power—to immediately transform others, as it does Saul, who became the fervent disciple Paul, the disciples themselves, and all of us too, who hear, see, and believe.

Today we again enter into Jesus' presence, as we come to this table, to witness once again, as for the very first time, the miracle of Jesus' love and sacrifice for every one of us, and all of us. As we receive Communion, together, we accept God's grace, so that any disgrace which we have experienced or encountered is washed away, our sins are shriven (as in Shrove Tuesday) and our souls are cleansed, and recommitted to Christ and to God. Amen.

**The Sacrament of Holy Communion  
Invitation**

**L:** God is with you!

**P:** And God is with us all.

L: Open wide your hearts.

**P: We open them completely to the Spirit of God.**

L: May God's love nurture your wandering spirits each day.

**P: May God's light sustain your souls each night.**

**Prayer of Communion** This is a season of wilderness - the season we grasp to understand the Divine just a little more. This is the time for us to reach inwards to find the self that God sees. This is the chance for us to gaze outwards, caring for the Christ in our midst. The Lenten roads are long yet full of gifts. The Lenten paths often seem chilly yet warm with the winds of the Spirit. The Spirit of God is the light that leads us in the hushed nights. The Christ is our companion on the journey in the intense sunlight of day. We remember his time in the wilderness - the struggles. The hunger. The peace. And as we seek the Divine in our midst, on this journey, we crave the bread of life. On our desert roads, we thirst for the fruit of the vine, the cup of blessings. Through Jesus the Christ's story, we remember the night before his arrest, the night of serenity, solemnity, and love. Jesus took in his hands bread from the table. He broke it and blessed it. *Eat in remembrance of me*, he said.

And after supper, as the night grew long, Jesus took a cup and filled it with the fruit of the vine. As he blessed it, he spoke aloud to them *Take and drink and always remember me*.

*The Elements are Served by Intinction*

May the Spirit who traveled with Christ in the wilderness and fills us with the hope of God surround these elements. May the Spirit speak to us in this season of wilderness becoming our strength on this journey and filling our lives with love. Amen.

**Prayer of Thanksgiving** Divine Light of Our Journey - in a spirit of gratitude we give thanks for this time at your Holy Meal. This time at the Table filled us with strength, knowing that as we continue on this Lenten journey, we will find your peace surrounding us. Amen.

**Communion Hymn** *Bread of the World*, VU # 461

Bread of the world, in mercy broken,  
wine of the soul in mercy shed,  
by whom the words of life were spoken,  
and in whose death our sins are dead:

Look on the heart by sorrow broken,  
look on the tears by sinners shed,  
and be your feast to us the token  
that by your grace our souls are fed.

**Pastoral Prayers**

**Parting Hymn** *All the Way My Saviour Leads Me*, VU # 635

All the way my Saviour leads me,  
What have I to ask beside?  
Can I doubt His tender mercy,  
Who through life has been my Guide?  
Heav'nly peace, divinest comfort,  
Here by faith in Him to dwell!  
For I know, whate'er befall me,  
Jesus doeth all things well.

All the way my Saviour leads me,  
Cheers each winding path I tread,  
Gives me grace for every trial,  
Feeds me with the living Bread.  
Though my weary steps may falter  
And my soul athirst may be,  
Gushing from the Rock before me,  
Lo! A spring of joy I see.

All the way my Saviour leads me,  
Oh, the fullness of His love!  
Perfect rest to me is promised  
In my Father's house above.  
When my spirit, clothed immortal,  
Wings its flight to realms of day  
This my song through endless ages:  
'Jesus led me all the way.'

**Commissioning & Benediction** The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. May the Peace of our Lord be with you all of your waking and sleeping moments. Amen.

**Choral Doxology**

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.  
Amen.

**Choral Amen**