

### **Third Sunday in Lent March 8, 2026**

When we observe or perceive something we typically find more meaning in that thing if we can make a personal connection to it. So, for example, if you're an athlete, you're watching the Olympics, and you're a skier, and you're watching those skiers, then you can really substantially appreciate what they are doing. You can see what techniques they might use or how they do this or that aspect of the sport really, really well. If you're an ice skater, I don't know if there's any ice skaters out there, not a lot of skating rinks around here. But you can appreciate, you know, the twists and the landings and all of that. You can appreciate that a lot more than someone like me. I can look at that and say, wow, that clearly takes a lot of skill to do all of that. But I don't understand the techniques of skiing or ice skating. I don't do the luge, you know? I don't understand what it takes to do those things. So, watching those sports has less meaning for me than it would for someone who knows the sport.

But if I'm watching a concert pianist give a recital, then I'm there. I'm watching, I can see, like, I can appreciate the technique, and, wow, look at the octaves, you know, just so relaxed or I can appreciate the skill that that person employed in doing what they're doing. And so, I enjoy watching this more than I would enjoy watching something else that I don't know about a personal connection to. And if you are a cook, someone's cooking something in your kitchen, you're probably there watching. Or if someone's building something in your shop, you're probably there, interested in what they're doing, how they're doing it.

Well, the same is true with the Scriptures, isn't it? When something is presented to us in the Word of God we are meant to find some sort of a personal connection with it. Not just to observe Jesus, saying

what He's saying, doing what He's doing, and say, wow, He did that really masterfully. The way He handled that conversation with the woman in well, wow, as if, there's just some sort of intellectual exercise or that we're looking at it with disinterested, I mean, with no connection to it. No, we need to find ourselves in the Word of God in order to have a deeper connection to it and therefore to derive more meaning from it. And certainly, today's Gospel has many, many beings that can be drawn from it, that we can really connect with.

Many of Fathers of the Church have commented on this passage, this encounter of Jesus with the woman at the well, the Samaritan woman. St. Augustine, for example, saw in the woman a representation of all of humanity thirsting for God. Thirsting for the truth. Thirsting for unconditional love. He saw the well as a symbol of that longing for truth. He saw the water Jesus offers as the response that is divine praise, that it is the Holy Spirit. Augustine saw the five husbands of the woman as the five senses. Sight, taste, hearing, touch, smell because, so often, it's our senses that we pursue or we employ in the pursuit of satisfaction of that longing of the heart. And we find that those senses fail to satisfy in the long run. There might be some fleeting pleasure that's offered there. But there's no way that the senses can satisfy our deepest longing for God. So that's what he sees in all of this, the longing of humanity for God, and the way we pursue happiness in other places, besides God.

Saint John Chrysostom focused instead on the transformation that happens in the woman, going from being not even a believer, to really being an evangelist. She goes out and shares with the people of this town, how she has experienced love, how she has experienced the divine in this person of Jesus. She becomes a believer and she shares the good news. She has a transformation

that goes on. We can see ourselves in that, too. She leaves the bucket behind, and St. John Chrysostom points out that as a symbol that she's leaving her former life behind and embracing a new life of faith in Jesus.

Origin took more of an allegorical approach to this passage. He said the well symbolizes the Old Testament scriptures. And that drawing water from the well symbolizes the study of the Law and the prophets, but then Christ comes along and gives the deeper insight, right? Christ is the fullness of revelation. He is representing all the New Testament and all the truth that is presenting in Him.

And there are lots of other themes, as I said, that can be drawn from this passage, ways that we can connect. Maybe you see something of ourselves in the shame that the woman has. Maybe there's something in our life we don't really want to bring to the Lord, or we don't really want to go into a vulnerability even with God. But He pierces through that and calls it out. He wants to bring healing. Maybe we see ourselves in the disciples who come along, thinking that they're in the 'in' crowd and thinking "Why are you talking to her? Why is he associating with her?" Sometimes you say, "What is that person doing in church?" I say, "Praise the Lord and the Church."

There are different ways to find ourselves, maybe the Samaritans of the town who come to discover Christ. Maybe we have a story of conversion in our own life about how someone proclaimed the good news of Christ to us, and found and discovered, like the Samaritans.

Lent is a good time to look at these themes that Augustine, Saint John Chrysostom, **and** Origin highlight for us. Take a look at how these are lived in our own life. How do you connect with this passage? Where is our thirst for God, for example? Do we find

ourselves everyday longing for God, thirsting for God? Or do we do our own things and sort of try to fit God into the cracks, into the spaces in life? Or are we, in our journey, conversion of the Lord? Are we getting to the point where we actually share with people on a regular basis what the Lord is doing in our life, inviting people to consider walking with Him? Or what about our study of Scripture, are we studying in Scripture? Do we read it? Do we look at it? Do we watch videos that explain Scripture?

Lent is good time to ask for the grace we need. Ask God for the grace to the thirst for Him. Ask God for the grace to believe more fully. Ask God for the grace, to share with others. Ask God for the grace to delve into the scriptures, to love scriptures, studying them, and understand them.

The truth is, we can very much connected with the Word of God with these accounts that are given to us in these Scriptures, we find ourselves there, and we find Jesus inviting us into a deeper encounter.