

# Sunday Message

3RD SUNDAY OF LENT

## THE WORD

Year A • 8 March 2026 • Psalter Week 3

The story of the meeting of Jesus and a woman at the well is one of the highlights of John's Gospel. More than any other Gospel, John emphasises the importance of personal encounters with Jesus.

For Jews, Samaria was a kind of 'no man's land' between the regions of Galilee and Judea. Samaria had at one time been the seat of the independent Jewish Kingdom of Israel. Captured by the Assyrians more than 700 years before the birth of Christ, it had been 'planted' with non-Jewish people who intermarried with remnants of the local Jewish population. Other Jews saw them as outsiders and as tainted. Samaritans returned the compliment and sometimes harassed Jewish pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. It was territory best avoided. The Samaritans were proud of their ancient Jewish roots, however, including the well of the patriarch Jacob that is the scene of today's Gospel.

Tired from travelling and in need of a drink, Jesus stops at a well where he encounters a Samaritan woman with a colourful past who has come to draw water from it. Jesus does the unthinkable. He speaks to her. He is aware of her past but doesn't let it get in the way. He is aware, too, that she is a Samaritan. But he doesn't see her as different or unworthy or inferior. Instead, he sees the good in her.

He asks her to give him a drink. She replies, "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" She's astonished that he would speak to her, of all people.

Then they start to talk about religion, and Jesus reveals himself as the Messiah. Rather than dismiss his claim, the woman returns to her people to tell them about Jesus. She bears witness to Jesus. This outcast of a woman, this foreigner, this outsider, brings people to faith. She becomes a true disciple.

All because Jesus treated her with love and respect. Just like he treated everyone he encountered. ■

### SAY

"Lord, help me to treat everyone as you would treat them. Fill me with your love."

### PRAY

Today's Gospel is a story of how a woman and her townspeople come to faith. Thank God for the gift of faith you have received. Pray for a deepening of your faith.



## THE GIFT OF FAITH

JOHN 4:5-42

### REFLECT

As 1938 began, life was good for 11-year-old Robert Borger. His family owned an electrical goods shop in Vienna. He liked school, had many friends. Then disaster struck. Hitler marched into Austria, unifying the country with Germany. It was a catastrophe for Austria's Jews, and the Borger family was Jewish. Jews were assaulted, their businesses ransacked, their lives made intolerable.

Overnight, Robert's schoolmates shunned him. They wouldn't play with him, taunted him, chased him away. Imagine his horror at suddenly being terrorised by those he considered friends.

Desperate to get his son to safety, Robert's father placed an ad in *The Guardian* newspaper, which read: 'I seek a kind person who will educate my intelligent boy, aged 11, Viennese of good family.'

A wonderful Welsh couple responded to the ad and Robert eventually reached them in Wales. But he was never the same. He had experienced so much trauma, he died before his time, another victim of the Nazis.

That's what racism does, what hate produces. Hitler's racism murdered over six million Jews, gypsies and others, and destroyed the lives of millions more, like Robert. And people let it happen. There would have been no holocaust if enough Germans had opposed Hitler, if they'd said no. But they remained silent, and so became complicit in genocide.

Three years ago, at World Youth Day in Portugal, Pope Francis spoke to half a million pilgrims from throughout the world. "Friends, I want to be clear with you," he said. "In the church, there is room for

everyone. Everyone. In the church, no one is left out or left over. There is room for everyone, just the way we are.

"Everyone, everyone, everyone," he repeated.

That message summed up Francis' papacy. Open church, open hearts. It's a message of inclusion our church needs to hear. It's a message of inclusion our world badly needs to hear.

We see what racism is doing in Gaza today, what racism is doing in so many countries, how hate is flooding the internet, dividing people rather than bringing them together.

Racism is a sin. It's never justified under any circumstances against any person or any group. So, what to do?

First, be actively unracist. It's not enough to oppose racism. We must actively oppose it, take a stand against it, wherever we encounter it – in person or online. When we see hate, we must call it out.

Second, try to stand in the other person's shoes. Imagine you were that person. How would you like to be treated?

Third, be welcoming. Go out of your way to make people feel at home. To be Christian is to welcome and include. It is the opposite of them and us. For Christians, there is no them and us – only everyone together, as Pope Francis told those young people.

Jesus didn't see the Samaritan woman as a foreigner to be avoided, victimised or denigrated. He treated her with profound respect. It's how we must treat everyone. ■

### LEARN

Water is a central image of today's Gospel. It teaches us that Jesus is the living water who leads us to eternal life.

Christians make no distinctions between people.

### DO

Remember Jesus' words in the judgement scene in Matthew's Gospel: I was a stranger and you welcomed me. Think about your attitude to immigrants, to strangers. Will God be pleased with you on judgement day?

## ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

*When I prove my holiness among you,  
I will gather you from all the foreign lands;  
and I will pour clean water upon you  
and cleanse you from all your impurities,  
and I will give you a new spirit, says the Lord.*

## COLLECT

O God, author of every mercy and of all goodness, who in fasting, prayer and almsgiving have shown us a remedy for sin, look graciously on this confession of our lowliness, that we, who are bowed down by our conscience, may always be lifted up by your mercy...

*Amen.*

## FIRST READING Exodus 17:3-7

A reading from the Book of Exodus.

In those days: The people thirsted for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, 'Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?' So Moses cried to the LORD, 'What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.' And the LORD said to Moses, 'Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.' And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarrelling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, 'Is the LORD among us or not?'

The word of the Lord.

*Thanks be to God.*

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 95(94):1-2. 6-7b. 7c-9. R. 7c. 8a

*R: O that today you would listen to his voice!  
'Harden not your hearts.'*

1. Come, let us ring out our joy to the LORD;  
hail the rock who saves us.  
Let us come into his presence, giving thanks;  
let us hail him with a song of praise. **R.**
2. O come; let us bow and bend low.  
Let us kneel before the LORD who made us,  
for he is our God, and we the people,  
the people of his pasture, the flock of 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 forebears put me to the test;  
when they tried me, though they saw my work.' **R.**

## SECOND READING Romans 5:1-2, 5-8

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans.

Brothers and sisters: Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die – but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The word of the Lord.

*Thanks be to God.*

## ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL cf. John 4:42. 15

*R: Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God.*

Lord, you are indeed the Saviour of the world;  
give me living water, so that I will not be thirsty.

*R: Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God.*

## GOSPEL John 4:5-15, 19-26, 39-42

*(a longer version may be read: John 4:5-42)*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

At that time: Jesus came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.' (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?' (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus 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.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.' Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.'

'Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.' The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming – he who is called Christ. When he comes, he will tell us all things.' Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am he.'

Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony. So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They 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 indeed the Saviour of the world.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

*Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.*

## PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Be pleased, O Lord, with these sacrificial offerings, and grant that we who beseech pardon for our own sins, may take care to forgive our neighbour... **Amen.**

## COMMUNION ANTIPHON

*For anyone who drinks it, says the Lord,  
the water I shall give will become in him  
a spring welling up to eternal life.*

## PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

As we receive the pledge  
of things yet hidden in heaven  
and are nourished while still on earth  
with the Bread that comes from on high,  
we humbly entreat you, O Lord,  
that what is being brought about in us in mystery  
may come to true completion... **Amen.**