

Third Sunday in Lent

Year A RCL

March 12, 2023

Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 95; Romans 5:1-11; John 4:5-42

**“The water that I will give will become in them
a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”**

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Our journey in Lent presents for our reflection a series of encounters that gradually reveal the nature of Jesus and his messianic mission. We pass from the temptations in the wilderness to the dialogue with Nicodemus at nighttime, and today- the Third Sunday in Lent, Jesus encounters the Samaritan woman.

This encounter which is at the center of the season of Lent is a well created interaction in John’s gospel that shows the presence of God in Jesus and the transformation of the Samaritan woman into a committed evangelist. The Samaritan woman after her interaction with Jesus, left her water jar and went into the city to give testimony to the point that the gospel describes, “Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony”. Other Samaritans, in experiencing Jesus in first person have the opportunity to

confirm and believe for themselves. They say 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.”

The fact that the gospel of John chooses to narrate this encounter of transformation having a Samaritan woman protagonist, a person that somehow was an outcast in her own town because of her past of having had five husbands and now a boyfriend, demonstrates in her the unlimited redemption of God. John’s gospel places this the longest conversation in the Gospels between Jesus and any person, confirms in this Samaritan woman the new important roles that women carry in the spreading of the kingdom. This Samaritan woman anticipates the recognition of the Risen Lord by Mary of Magdalen and shows that in the new messianic times, there is inclusion and respect for the genders.

“How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” This question centers the countercultural and non-conforming nature of Jesus actions. He is tired and thirsty to the point beyond any cultural and social barriers and asks for a drink of water. The fact that Jesus finds the woman at the well confirms the very nature of God that comes to the places where we are; it is in the day to day of our lives that God appears in the ordinary life. The Samaritan woman

feels safe to engage in a conversation and she is not afraid to ask Jesus questions.

The initial conversation is about physical water, Jesus is thirsty and asks for a drink. We recognize that we can fast from food, but not from water. Lack of water provokes death, and the murmuring of the Israelites and the spectacular manifestation of God that orders Moses to strike the rock to receive gushing water in the dessert (Exodus 17:1-7). The lack of water is recognized as the cause of the hardened heart for which the biblical narrative associates with Meribah, and Massah- places where the Israelites tested God (Psalm 95:8). In his conversation with the Samaritan woman, Jesus refers to himself as the living water, a spring that gushes up to give eternal life.

From the living water, which reflects the presence of the Holy Spirit as in Romans (Ch. 5:5), the interaction between the Samaritan Woman and Jesus unveils in a progressive revelation Jesus' identity and mission: Sir (v. 11, 15), prophet (v. 19), Messiah (v. 25-26), Savior of the world (v. 42). These titles serve to educate and verify the understanding of the Samaritan Woman; she passes from seeking water from the well, to carry the Living Water with her to others.

The Samaritan woman proves to us that each encounter with Jesus is transformation and new life if we believe in God. The love of Jesus is superior to our sins- Jesus comes to us where we are and offers redemption, forgiveness, and unending life that is more than the physical water. This encounter proves also that our testimony is important to bring others to Jesus. The woman calls others to experience the same love that she did, “She said to the people, “Come and see” as an invitation.

The Savior of the world shows his humanity and vulnerability to this outcast woman that experiences a different kind of thirst. This passage of the gospel evokes another moment of Jesus’ thirst on the cross (John 19:28) where the Messiah is the fulfilment of the prophecies of the Old Testament.

Our journey of Lent then poses a question: What do we thirst for? Amen.