

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 8 March 2026 - The Third Sunday of Lent

Lectionary Readings (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Exodus 17.1-7; Psalm 95; Romans 5.1-11; John 4. 5-42

Homily

Today's homily has been written by Susan Rawlings, LLM, Madingley (Benefice)

Jesus and the Samaritan woman by the well

The story of Jesus' meeting and the Samaritan woman by the well, told by St John, is perhaps one of the best known in the Gospels. To start with, let's picture the scene. Jesus and his disciples had been travelling from Judaea to Galilee and so needed to go through Samaria. The disciples went on to the nearby town of Sychar to get supplies. Jesus stayed behind and sat down by the well. It was called Jacob's well because it was the place where Jacob came safely with his wife and children after his time with Laban. Jacob bought a piece of land and built an altar for the Lord and so the well there became known as Jacob's well. Jesus must have been hot and tired and thirsty after his journey. The noonday sun was beating down. As he sat there, a woman approached the well with her water jar. Jesus said, "Give me drink". The woman was surprised and said, "How is it that you, being a Jew, ask a drink of me, a Samaritan woman?"

We need to unpack the significance of this exchange. In the first place the hostility, even hatred, between Jews and Samaritans ran deep. It had its origins in their history. When the kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians in 722, much of the Israelite population was deported and replaced by a foreign population which settled in Samaria. They intermarried with the remaining Israelites and so a separate community grew up, ethnically and religiously different from the Jews. This difference was cast in stone, as it were, because the Israelites held that the centre of their worship was in the temple in Jerusalem whereas the Samaritans worshipped in the temple they built on Mt. Gerizem. It was therefore astonishing that a Jew should speak to a Samaritan. It was more astonishing that a Jewish man should speak to a Samaritan woman. It was tradition that a Pharisee would not even speak to his wife in public, let alone speak to an unknown woman. There was also something unusual about the woman. She had come to the well on her own, in the heat of the day, without her friends with her. We learn later that after five marriages she was living with a man not her husband. Perhaps she was not quite "respectable". Perhaps she was shunned by her own community.

So, what did they talk about together? They talked about living water, about her husbands, about worship, about the Messiah. An amazing range of topics for two complete strangers. But then as we find out, the woman was not really a stranger to Jesus. He knew her and the details of her life, as he knows us all and the secrets of our hearts. And by the end of this remarkable conversation, the woman had come to faith.

If you asked, Jesus says, God will give you living water, not like the water for the well which can never quench your thirst. For those who drink the living water it will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life. The drink which Jesus gives is of a spiritual nature. And it's not just for one time. It results in an eternal connection with God, a permanent satisfying of the need for God. And the woman says, "Give me this water". No doubt she is thinking that it will save her many trips to the well to fetch water. But perhaps she is beginning to understand that the water Jesus gives is not just a labour saving device, but the spiritual connection to his Father God which only he can give.

Jesus tells her to go and call her husband. Then the woman is astonished that Jesus knows about her five husbands and is now living with a man who is not her husband - living in sin, as previous generations might have called it. To know this about her convinced the woman that Jesus was a prophet, possibly the Messiah. And she perhaps remembered that Isaiah had said that the Messiah would not judge by what his eyes see or decide by what his ears hear, but with righteousness (Isaiah 11.2.3). That leads on to a discussion of worship. It was long thought in antiquity that God resided in a particular place where he could be found and where prayer should be offered. Jesus is saying quite plainly that the debate about Mt Gerizem or Jerusalem as the centre of worship was essentially meaningless. The time is coming, Jesus says, when people will know that because God is spirit, he is everywhere and so can be worshipped anywhere. True worshippers, Jesus says, will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, referring to God's word and particularly as revealed in the New Testament. The woman said "I know that the Messiah is coming. When he comes he will proclaim all things to us". Jesus' response to this is amazing. He said, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you" (4.26). He reveals his true identity to this Samaritan woman - she is not even Jewish - who has a questionable past. And, as the story continues, she turns out to be an evangelist for Jesus, bringing her fellow townsfolk to belief and therefore to salvation..

At this moment the disciples arrive back from Sychar and are surprised to find Jesus talking the Samaritan woman. Now an evangelist for Jesus, she hurries back to the town to call the people to come to meet him. The people came to Jesus and believed in him because of the woman's testimony. Jesus stayed with them for two days and many more came to belief because they heard Jesus for themselves and knew that he was the Saviour of the world. That knowledge can only come from the spirit.

This is such a rich and wonderful story which gives us much food for thought. Maybe it would be worth pondering during the coming week how and where you came to faith.

Amen.

Ways to Engage all Generations

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what your favourite part of the story/passage is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder who your favourite character is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder how _____ felt or I wonder how _____ felt when _____ happened?
- I wonder how you feel about _____?
- I wonder where you are in this story?
- I wonder what part of the story is about you?
- I wonder what the [tree, pearl, coin] could really be?
- I wonder why _____ said _____?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?

Suggested intercessions

Loving God, in hope and trust we come to you now with our concerns for the Church and for the world.

We bring before you those who find it hard to believe, so hard to trust in a faithful, loving, God. We bring those who teach the faith, all who preach and talk about the Good News of Jesus Christ. Give us the right words for each situation and each person to enable the seed to take root and grow.

Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

We bring those whose authority and decisions affect the lives of many people and the health of our planet. We pray for understanding and honesty and the strength to retain integrity when in positions of power.

Lord hear us ...

We bring to you the needs of people suffering in the turmoil of war and conflict, the anguish of famine and disease, and the effects of natural disasters.

Lord, hear us ...

Whenever a child is born, we celebrate the creative hope they bring. We offer our prayers for all being born this week, for their families and communities. Help us to perceive your guiding in all our relationships and above all in our relationship with you.
Lord, hear us ...

We bring before you all for whom illness or injury has caused disruption, uncertainty and the prospect of long-term change. Make them aware of your loving and unchanging presence all around them and the comfort of your protection.
Lord, hear us ...

We commend to your love and mercy all those who have made the journey through death to your eternal kingdom. Grant them rest and peace.
Lord, hear us ...

As we call to mind the guidance and the help you give us every moment of each day, we offer you our thanks and our loving service day by day.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Suggested hymns/songs

The God of Abraham praise
O Jesus I have promised
Father hear the prayer we offer
Lord for the years
Take my life and let it be
All my hope on God is founded
Amazing grace
Be thou my vision
Lead us Heavenly Father
Love divine
Dear Lord and Father of mankind
Jesus calls us
Be thou my guardian and my guide

Activities to accompany the service:

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.com/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@ lectionary resource)