

## Wednesday Worship—People Jesus Met

22nd July 2020

### The Woman at the Well

#### Opening prayers

Welcome in the name of Christ.  
May God's grace, mercy and peace be with us.

God, let this be a fruitful day!  
In this time of worship,  
open our eyes to beauty,  
tune our ears to harmony.  
The fragrance of your love  
permeating every moment.  
The touch of your hand  
guiding all we do.  
Together, we want to taste with delight  
the joy of your presence with us today.

All **Amen**

#### Introduction

Today we see Jesus disregarding social convention and taboos so that he can reach out to a woman in need of his truth and love. We don't know the name of the Samaritan woman at the well but we can know that she was important to God. This gives us hope that we are all important to God, not just the well-known and the famous, and encourages us to reach past our social boundaries to show love and care to others.

#### Hymn: I heard the voice of Jesus say

#### Prayers with lighting of a candle

When we hunger  
All **We cry to the Lord, "Help us, O Lord".**

When we thirst  
All **We cry to the Lord, "Help us, O Lord".**

Our God who created the heavens and the earth hears our cries.  
All **Lord, come and quench our thirst and heal our hunger.**

Come, let us worship  
and celebrate God's loving presence with us.  
All **We sing to God with our hearts and our spirits.**

### **Ist Reading: Isaiah 12**

You will say on that day:  
I will give thanks to you, O LORD,  
for though you were angry with me,  
your anger turned away,  
and you comforted me.

Surely God is my salvation;  
I will trust, and will not be afraid,  
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my might;  
he has become my salvation.

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say on that day:  
Give thanks to the LORD,  
call on his name;  
make known his deeds among the nations;  
proclaim that his name is exalted.

Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;  
let this be known in all the earth.  
Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion,  
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

### **Prayer of response**

Lord our God,  
you are indeed our salvation and our joy.  
We give thanks to you for your goodness to us,  
and take shelter in the shadow of your wings.

All **Amen.**

### **Psalm 65**

Praise is due to you,  
O God, in Zion;  
and to you shall vows be performed,  
O you who answer prayer!  
To you all flesh shall come.  
When deeds of iniquity overwhelm us,  
you forgive our transgressions.  
Happy are those whom you choose and bring near  
to live in your courts.  
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house,  
your holy temple.  
By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance,  
O God of our salvation;  
you are the hope of all the ends of the earth  
and of the farthest seas.  
By your strength you established the mountains;  
you are girded with might.

You silence the roaring of the seas,  
the roaring of their waves,  
the tumult of the peoples.  
Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs;  
you make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy.  
You visit the earth and water it,  
you greatly enrich it;  
the river of God is full of water;  
you provide the people with grain,  
for so you have prepared it.  
You water its furrows abundantly,  
settling its ridges,  
softening it with showers,  
and blessing its growth.  
You crown the year with your bounty;  
your wagon tracks overflow with richness.  
The pastures of the wilderness overflow,  
the hills gird themselves with joy,  
the meadows clothe themselves with flocks,  
the valleys deck themselves with grain,  
they shout and sing together for joy.

### **Prayer of response**

O God, whose work of creation embraces all that is,  
may we know what it is to be brought near to dwell with you;  
cleanse and replenish us with your goodness and bounty,  
and fill us with joy at the world around us.

All **Amen.**

### **2nd Reading: Revelation 22.1-6**

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever.

And he said to me, 'These words are trustworthy and true, for the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.'

### **Prayer of response**

Lord, we wait with eager anticipation  
for the coming of your kingdom and the healing of the nations.  
May we always be refreshed by the water of life  
and reign with you for ever.

All **Amen.**

### 3rd Reading: John 4.1-30

Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, 'Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John'— although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized— he left Judea and started back to Galilee. But he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'. (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' (Jews do not share things in common 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 no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?' Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.'

Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come back.' The woman answered him, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right in saying, "I have no husband"; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!' The woman said to him, 'Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 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 seeks such as these 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' (who is called Christ). 'When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.' Jesus said to her, 'I am he, the one who is speaking to you.'

Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, 'What do you want?' or, 'Why are you speaking with her?' Then the woman left her water-jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, 'Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?' They left the city and were on their way to him.

### Prayer of response

Lord our God,  
sometimes you come in unexpected ways.  
Open our eyes to see you,  
and our ears to hear you,  
that we might receive the good things  
you long to give us.

All **Amen.**

## Hymn: Holy Spirit, truth divine

### Reflection

*This reflection is based on a beautiful sermon by Katharine Smith, a writer and preacher based in Somerset, and if you would like to read her fuller version you can find it at <https://www.katharinesmith.org.uk/sermon-for-third-sunday-of-lent-year-a/>*

Jesus said: "... those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." (John 4.14)

I've recently been to the Lake District, with my husband. It's a lovely part of the country and it was wonderful to get away on holiday, especially as, like a lot of people, our last holiday was cancelled because of the pandemic. But it was very wet. There was a lot of rain, as is normal in those parts, really. We still got some good walks in, though, and the Lakes wouldn't be what they are without all that water. Thinking of our own rainy island, we might feel a million miles away from a Samaritan woman living in a hot, dusty country 2,000 years ago, but perhaps we have more in common with her than it seems.

As she comes to the well, the woman is carrying a heavy jar in the midday sun. It will be even heavier on the way back. We can just turn on taps but maybe we know what it's like to be tired and walking through life carrying heavy burdens that weigh us down and tire us out. It might be illness, worry, unemployment, not knowing what's going to happen next, or alternatively being stuck in a grinding daily routine. We too know what it's like to be burdened.

The woman is by herself. The other women came earlier, when it was cooler, and they came all together. This woman isn't welcome. The others don't approve of her or understand her situation. Perhaps we too sometimes feel isolated. We may hear insensitive remarks from people who don't understand us or our circumstances. We might feel like we don't belong because we're different in some way. Or maybe we realise that our tragedy or unhappiness makes others uncomfortable. We also know loneliness.

The woman sees a man at the well. She's a woman alone, vulnerable to potential assault as an outcast who no-one cares about. Is this man one of the good ones or not? We may not fear a physical threat from others, at least not often. But we might fear verbal attacks, careless remarks, thoughtless words that wound. So, we put up a barrier that's hard to take down and get trapped by our own defences.

The woman sees that this man is a Jew. An enemy of her people. We too meet people we are taught to hate or look down on or ignore. How can we overcome this? The Jew speaks, holding his hand out in a gesture of friendship, "Give me a drink" he says. Jesus himself bridges the gap between them but the woman doesn't understand. She asks, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?". She's aware of the gap between her and Jesus and the barrier which seems unclimbable. Maybe we too are aware of all that lies between us and Jesus: the loads we're carrying, our feelings of not being good enough. Maybe we feel we have nothing good enough to offer.

But Jesus doesn't ask for a gift. He gives a gift. He says, "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". "Living Water": clean and clear, flowing swiftly, cooling, refreshing, cleansing, life-giving, the energy of life itself. Now Jesus is saying: "... those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life". This water springs up and reaches into the deepest places of our hearts and clears a way through the defences we build to keep away the risk of being hurt, of failing or of feeling pain in any form. Jesus reaches through it all, knows it all, understands it all, forgives and heals it all.

Why would we not want to receive this gift? Like the woman of Samaria, we ask, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water". And we go in peace, knowing that Jesus has heard and given his gift to us. We may still be carrying some burdens, like the woman who had to carry her water jar back home, but we know that living water is ours for the asking, now that we've met with Jesus.

### **Intercessions**

Heavenly Father pour out the living water of your Spirit upon your Church in the world. Give us the humility and courage to seek unity where we are divided. Give us the grace to exclude no-one from fellowship because we disapprove of their way of life or the expression of their faith. Remind us always that it is only through your gracious love that we can find peace with you.

Generous God,

*All* **pour out your love.**

Heavenly Father pour out the living water of your Spirit upon the nations of the world. Help us to find ways of seeking peace and reconciliation. Give grace, wisdom and insight to the powerful that they may surrender some of their power; to the rich that they may surrender some of their wealth; and to those who live in hatred and prejudice that they may learn better ways to be.

Generous God,

*All* **pour out your love.**

Heavenly Father pour out the living water of your Spirit upon our communities and families. Help us to allow that living water to flow through us, enabling us to reach out to those around us. Help us not to be afraid to show kindness to strangers or to stand alongside those on the edges of our society. Give to us the Spirit that was in Jesus, drawing people to him and uniting them in their common experience of his compassion and love.

Generous God,

*All* **pour out your love.**

Heavenly Father pour out the living water of your Spirit upon all who are in need. We pray for those who face another day of pain, illness, fear, loneliness, depression or anxiety. Let them find in you refreshment, hope and comfort for their spirit and the peace of mind that comes with the assurance of your presence alongside them.

Generous God,

*All* **pour out your love.**

Heavenly Father, we offer these prayers to you and ask that you use them, and us, to further the work of your Kingdom here on earth and so that all people will know that you, our Lord, are indeed among us today.

*All*     **Amen.**

*All*     **Our Father, which art in heaven...**

*Hymn: Peace is flowing like a river*

*Closing prayers*

*All*     **God of our pilgrimage,  
you have led us to the living water:  
refresh and sustain us  
as we go forward on our journey,  
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

May God who in Christ gives us a spring of water  
welling up to eternal life,  
perfect in us the image of his glory;  
and the blessing...

*All*     **Amen.**