

Sunday Worship Sheet – 12th March 2023– Lent 3

Our worship for this week was written by Howard Jackson,
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You may wish to have your Bible to hand. Please note the hymns are now at the back of the sheet for ease of printing. CCLI licence 556292

Introduction: Today is the third Sunday in Lent. Our Gospel reading takes us further along our journey of reflection about our relationship with Jesus.

Opening Prayer: Lord, as we reflect on the account of Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman, may we see in it a picture of our own misunderstandings of Jesus' teaching.

Hymn 1: 73 Fill thou my life, O Lord my God.

Prayer of Approach: Come, everyone who is thirsty. Come, the lost and the seekers. Come, the lonely and the welcomers. Come, the sad and the comforters. Come, the empty and the generous. Come as you are, with your questions and beliefs. Come and drink at the well of living water. Come and worship the living God.

Roots on the Web.

Prayer of Adoration: Eternal God, we approach you with joy as the One who saves and satisfies, who is patient and forbearing, who listens to your children. Our words are inadequate to express such majestic love, it is beyond human comprehension. We understand earthly pomp and ceremony, but we struggle with the concept of love until we meet you face to face on your terms, for you are all love. Amen.

From Companion to the Revised Common Lectionary 2.

The Lord's Prayer:

Prayer of Confession: The woman at the well knew Jesus knew her, warts and all. We come before you now, Jesus, and sit at the well expectantly, hearts open, ready to acknowledge our wrongdoing. Lord, please forgive us for the times we have failed you – unintentionally, or sometimes deliberately, for thinking we can fool you about the less public parts of our lives, about the state of our heart. Help us to humbly acknowledge that: you know everything we have ever done; you know when we exclude people; you know when we don't recognise you. Fill our hearts with your forgiveness, Lord, and make us ready to move forward with you. Amen.

Roots on the Web.

OT Reading: Genesis 29:1-14

Psalm: 95

Hymn 2: 340 Ye servants of God, your master proclaim.

Introduction to Gospel: This is an account of Jesus meeting a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well near Sychar. It has an amusing side, because she constantly misunderstands what Jesus is trying to tell her. But there is also a serious side which we will reflect on.

Gospel: John 4:1-42

Reflection:

In today's Gospel reading we find Jesus and his disciples travelling through Samaritan territory. Where and what was Samaria? After the death of King Solomon, civil war broke out between the northern and southern tribes. This resulted in two separate kingdoms, Israel in the north and Judea in the south. Samaria and the Samaritans were the remnant of the kingdom of Israel, with a temple in the city of Samaria rivalling the temple in Jerusalem, the capital city of Judea. Rivalry between the two temples led to a long-standing enmity between Judea and Samaria. Both Judea and Samaria survived the Greek and Roman conquests, as did the deep-seated enmity between them. At the time of Jesus, they were both ruled over by the same Jewish puppet king under the Roman governor. Considering the ongoing enmity between the two peoples, we do well to wonder why Jesus chose to take his disciples through Samaria. Although it was a longer route, the normal way would be along the Jordan valley from Judea to Galilee. And indeed, Luke records Jesus and his disciples going that way on his last visit to Jerusalem. But it was a good choice. A whole village was blessed, as a result.

In our story, Jesus left his disciples in the village of Sychar buying food whilst he walked on ahead of them. The well had been there a long time. Genesis 29 records Jacob having an unexpected reunion with his uncle Laban at the well fifteen hundred years earlier. The problem was that Jesus was thirsty but carried no cup with him to drink from. His conversation at the well with a woman is unconventional enough, but she was also a Samaritan. For a Jew, contact with Samaritans was considered the same as contact with a non-Jew – to be avoided at all costs. Talking to a Samaritan woman is double-jeopardy. Jesus must have been really thirsty! But the woman reminded Jesus that he was out of order to talk to her.

Jesus' reply is intriguing. We know now what he meant by "living water" and it was not the common meaning, denoting a spring. Evidently the woman misunderstood completely. She also spoke of "Jacob giving the well". Perhaps this was the Samaritan folk-memory preserved as a tradition. Some mistake, surely. The well was a well-established community resource in Jacob's time, as the account in Genesis 29 clearly shows!

As the conversation continued, Jesus prompted the woman to reveal more and more of herself and her beliefs. Including her six husbands. The latest man was apparently someone else's husband. She recognised Jesus then as a prophet, because he seemed to know everything about her. But the account is quite amusing, because the woman kept on misunderstanding what Jesus was saying, so he kept on trying to explain, without much success.

During Lent, we are encouraged to reflect on ourselves and our relationship with Jesus. Today we are led further along the road towards him. We are led to ask the question, "am I drinking of that living water of which Jesus spoke?" The woman in the story just didn't get it at all. She had a long

conversation with Jesus, with evident misunderstandings at every step. The only thing that seems to have got through to her was that Jesus was a prophet. Do we get it? Perhaps we already realise that the living water is the Holy Spirit. If that is all, we have missed the point completely. Jesus is inviting us to "drink of the living water". He said that we only need to ask for it. Like a thirsty person needs water, we need to drink our fill of the Holy Spirit. Only when the Holy Spirit is at the very core of our being, do we know what Jesus means by "The water I give them will become a spring, welling up into eternal life." Having the Holy Spirit at the core of our being will be a life-long, life-transforming experience. That is the meaning of the Gospel account of Jesus and the Samaritan woman. It is the challenge for us to reflect on throughout the rest of Lent.

Pause for thought:

Prayer of thanksgiving: You lived and died and rose again not for one people, but all people—family, friends, disciples, the curious, the envious, opponents, every sinner in every generation needing forgiveness and grace. You lived and died and rose again, not for one people, but this people, your people. Amen.

From Act of Prayer.

Prayers of Intercession: Loving God, when will we learn your true wisdom?

We pray for the world: suffering because too many people believe that to put themselves first is the only wise way; suffering because too many people cannot see the need for justice and the alleviation of want. We pray for leaders and rulers of nations, for those with power and influence in our society and for ourselves, in our daily lives and work. God of our lives, make us wise: make us loving.

We pray for the church: struggling to cling to its essential faith in you in the face of modern scepticism and scorn; struggling to be a house and people of prayer amidst the claims and clamours of everyday. We pray for the church throughout the world, for the congregations here in our Circuit and District, and for ourselves, in our daily lives and worship. God of our lives, make us wise: make us loving.

We pray for humankind: searching for meaning and hope in lives clouded by want, or suffering, or loss; searching for truth and the right way to live with you, with one another, or with themselves.

We pray for the sick ... , for the bereaved ... , for the anxious ... , and for ourselves, in our daily lives and spiritual quest. God of our lives, make us wise: make us loving. In the name of him who came to turn the values of this world upside down and to establish the values of the Kingdom of Love, Jesus Christ, our Judge and our Cleanser. Amen.

*From Companion to the Revised Common
Lectionary 1.*

Collect for Lent 3: Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

From Collects for Common Worship.

Hymn 3: 248 I heard the voice of Jesus say

Blessing: May you encounter Jesus in the everyday and be transformed by what he reveals to you about yourself.

Hymn 73

- 1 Fill thou my life, O Lord my God,
in every part with praise,
that my whole being may proclaim
thy being and thy ways.
- 2 Not for the lip of praise alone
nor e'en the praising heart
I ask, but for a life made up
of praise in every part :
- 3 Praise in the common things of life,
its goings out and in ;
praise in each duty and each deed,
however small and mean.
- 4 Fill every part of me with praise ;
let all my being speak
of thee and of thy love, O Lord,
poor though I be and weak.
- 5 So shalt thou, gracious Lord, from me
receive the glory due ;
and so shall I begin on earth
the song for ever new.
- 6 So shall no part of day or night
from sacredness be free ;
but all my life, in every step,
be fellowship with thee.

Horatius N. Bonar (1808–1889)

Hymn 340

- 1 Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim,
and publish abroad his wonderful name ;
the name all-victorious of Jesus extol ;
his kingdom is glorious, and rules over all.
- 2 God ruleth on high, almighty to save ;
and still he is nigh, his presence we have ;
the great congregation his triumph shall
sing,
ascribing salvation to Jesus our King.
- 3 'Salvation to God who sits on the throne !'
Let all cry aloud, and honour the Son ;
the praises of Jesus the angels proclaim,
fall down on their faces, and worship the
Lamb.
- 4 Then let us adore, and give him his right ;
all glory and power, all wisdom and might,
all honour and blessing, with angels above,
and thanks never-ceasing, and infinite love.

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Hymn 248

- 1 I heard the voice of Jesus say :
'Come unto me and rest ;
lay down, O weary one, lay down
your head upon my breast.'
I came to Jesus as I was,
weary and worn and sad,
I found in him a resting-place,
and he has made me glad.
- 2 I heard the voice of Jesus say :
'Behold, I freely give
the living water ; thirsty one,
stoop down and drink and live.'
I came to Jesus, and I drank
of that life-giving stream ;
my thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
and now I live in him.
- 3 I heard the voice of Jesus say :
'I am this dark world's Light ;
look unto me, your morn shall rise,
and all your day be bright.'
I looked to Jesus, and I found
in him my star, my sun ;
and in that light of life I'll walk,
till travelling days are done.

Horatius N. Bonar (1808–1889)