

## Lent 3A - Comments and questions about the lessons for March 8, 2026

### Exodus 17:1-7/Psalm 95

- Is the complaint of the Israelites all that unreasonable? They are in the wilderness – and they have no water!! What is the message of the story? How do we trust in God’s presence when our basic needs are not being met?
- This incident is found four different times– twice in our readings today. In Numbers 20, the incident becomes the justification for God’s banning Moses and Aaron from entering the Promised Land. Psalm 95 uses the incident as an appeal to hear God’s voice and not harden one’s heart. Hebrews uses it as an appeal to belief to obtain an other-worldly life.

### Romans 5:1-11 (lesson included below)

<sup>1</sup>Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup>through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. <sup>3</sup>And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup>and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup>and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

<sup>6</sup>For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup>Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. <sup>8</sup>But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup>Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. <sup>10</sup>For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. <sup>11</sup>But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

- Have you had an experience of how suffering produces endurance, which produces character, which produces hope? When have you known the presence and grace of God in the midst of suffering?
- What does it mean that “we have now received reconciliation”?

### John 4:5-42

- This encounter happening at noon contrasts with the meeting of Nicodemus at night in John 3. The religious insider (Nicodemus) is “in the dark” and remains unknown or confused. The religious outsider (woman at the well) is “in the light” and witnesses to her friends about who Jesus is. How does this incident challenge our assumptions about who is in and who is out?
- The language of Jesus is again confusing and ambiguous. When Jesus says “living water,” the woman first hears him to mean an underground spring. Jesus is speaking about “spiritual” water – a source that gives life meaning.
- Though the woman at the well is commonly portrayed as a woman of loose or questionable morals, there is no evidence in the passage for this. Jesus does not condemn the woman for her five husbands, nor does she understand any such judgment. Jesus says this to show his omniscience, his “all-knowing-ness.” If the woman was of questionable morals, why would the townspeople so readily come out to witness what she talked about?
- The woman carries on a remarkable conversation about the religious differences between Jews and Samaritans – particularly about where worship should occur. Jesus responds that worship is about being “in spirit and in truth.” What does that mean for us today? Do we let our religious differences get in the way? How do we get past those religious differences?
- John 2-12 could be seen as imitating a journey of life, reconceived in a spiritual sense. Such a structure would look like this:

John 2	-	The wedding -Water into wine
John 3	-	Being born (from above) - Nicodemus
John 4	-	Life essentials – water (as living water) – Woman at the well
John 5	-	Learning to walk – Healing of the lame man
John 6	-	Life essentials – bread - Feeding the 5000
John 9	-	Opening our eyes – growing up – Healing of the blind man
John 11	-	Dying – Raising of Lazarus
John 12	-	Burial – Mary anointing Jesus

During Lent, we will touch on four of these stories. In the lesson for Sunday, Jesus uses the image of water to speak to that which gives us life. In this dialogue, Jesus defines himself as that sustenance. Jesus speaks of worship as that which connects us. How does worship connect you to God?

- There is an alternative way to understand the “five husbands”: The origins of the Samaritans occur when Assyria took over the northern kingdom of Israel and took many into exile. When they did so, they repopulated the land with five nations: “The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria in place of the people of Israel; they took possession of Samaria, and settled in its cities.” (2 Kings 17:24). This is how the intermingling began, so that the Samaritans were seen as “half-breeds” by the Judeans. So, when Jesus refers the “five husbands” of the Samaritan woman, he may be referring to the five nations that “husbanded” the region of Samaria. Then the man “she lives with” would be the Roman occupation. If this is the case, then the woman’s conversation about worship is not a diversion from her personal life but a further exploration of the differences between the Samaritans and the Jews.



**2 Kings 17:6** *In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and deported the Israelites to Assyria. He settled them in Halah, in Gozan on the Habor River and in the towns of the Medes.*