

Notes for Next Sunday

Third Sunday in Lent

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Exodus 17:1-7). Almost from the moment they crossed the Red Sea to escape from the Egyptians the Israelites have found something to complain about. First it was manna, then lack of meat. Now it is water. Their complaints had been to Moses and sometimes Aaron, but basically they were against the Lord. Each time Moses had come to God for help. This time Moses is really exasperated which we can tell when he does claim them to be his or God's people but "these people" (v. 4). While Moses gets overwhelmed by these situations, God always provides for the needs of the people. He still patiently takes care of all our concerns and necessities.

Epistle (Romans 5:1-8). In verse 1 Paul boldly asserts that because they have been justified by faith they now have peace with God. This, he says, allows them to "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (v. 2). Paul then takes it a step further and tells them that they can even "rejoice in our sufferings" (v. 3). Then he does his "heaping on of precepts" as is his style to make a point of some kind. Here the point is that they can rejoice no matter the circumstances because each negative will lead to a positive and finally to a "hope that does not disappoint" (v. 5). He ends the text by saying that God did not wait for action on Their part to provide the hope of salvation but sent His Son to die for us while we were still sinners (v. 8).

Gospel (John 4:5-26). This is the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman. The Jews studiously avoided Samaria because of the enmity between the two groups, Jesus went through Samaria. It shows that Jesus goes where people are in need of His saving message. Jesus models for us of how to approach people who need His saving grace. He first listens to her and her story. He then gently helps her see her need for salvation. In the process she becomes a witness to the people in her social circle and brings them to Christ as well.

For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.

OLD TESTAMENT – Exodus 17:1-7

The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ²So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?" ³But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?" ⁴Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me." ⁵The LORD answered Moses, "Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

17:1 Rephidim. This was the next camping place of the Israelites reported in Exodus after the Desert of Sin, was not far from Mount Sinai. The rock which Moses struck there to get water was "at Horeb." Horeb, was the mountain range where Moses had tended sheep for his father-in-law Jethro. (PBC)

17:2 quarreled with Moses. This time the Israelites not only complain, they argue with Moses and even threaten to stone home. (PBC)

17:6 I will stand there ... by the rock. Paul may have had this incident in mind when he spoke of Christ as “the spiritual rock that accompanied” Israel (see 1Co 10:4; see also Heb 11:24–26). (CSB)

17:7 Massah and Meribah. Heb 3:7–8, 15 (quoting Ps 95:7–8) gives the meaning “testing” for Massah and “rebellion” for Meribah. (CSB)

EPISTLE – Romans 5:1-8

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.³ Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope.⁵ And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die.⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

5:1 peace with God. Not merely a subjective feeling (peace of mind) but primarily an objective status, a new relationship with God: Once we were his enemies, but now we are his friends. (CSB)

5:3 rejoice in our sufferings. Not “because of” but “in.” Paul does not advocate a morbid view of life but a joyous and triumphant one. (CSB)

5:3 perseverance. That resilient and athletic temper which is so sure of the future that it can live of the future and bear manfully the pressure of the present. (Franzmann)

5:4 character. This verb was used with reference to testing the genuineness and the weight of coins to determine whether or not they met the established standards and requirement. By means of suffering and perseverance, God tests and changes raw recruits into tempered veterans. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

5:5 hope. This is what Christians harbor in their hearts as a result of the love of God in Christ, a hope that is made stronger by suffering and the resultant perseverance and character. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

5:6 powerless. Greek term describes someone afflicted with illness, one who is completely powerless. (TLSB)

5:7 righteous man ... good man. The former means the just man who rarely benefits anyone whereas the good man does good things for other people and therefore someone might dare to die in his stead if the need arises. We were neither righteous nor good. (CSB)

GOSPEL – John 4:5-26

⁵ So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. ⁷ When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” ⁸ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a

drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)¹⁰ Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”¹¹ “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?”¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?”¹³ Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”¹⁵ The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”¹⁶ He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”¹⁷ “I have no husband,” she replied. Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband.¹⁸ The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”¹⁹ “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet.²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”²¹ Jesus declared, “Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.²³ Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”²⁵ The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”²⁶ Then Jesus declared, “I who speak to you am he.”

4:6 Jacob’s well. It was on this piece of land that Joseph was buried. And here was also a well or cistern which Jacob had dug after his return from Mesopotamia. The well, which is now known as Jacob's Well, is within ten minutes walk of the present village of Askar. (It is about a hundred feet deep and is protected by a wall and a coping. (Kretzmann)

4:6 tired. The word means to work hard and indicates a state of fatigue. Jesus has walked from Judea to Samaria – a distance of 40 or 50 miles, perhaps spread over several days – and he needed rest. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 2)

4:7 to draw water. People normally drew water at the end of the day rather than in the heat of midday (see Ge 24:11 and note). But the practice is attested by Josephus, who says that the young ladies whom Moses helped (Ex 2:15–17) came to draw water at noon. (CSB)

4:7 Give Me a drink. More than a simple request to satisfy thirst. By requesting water from her, Jesus ignored traditional hostility between Jews and Samaritans as well as denigrating attitudes toward women. (TLSB)

4:10 gift. The Greek for this word is used only here in this Gospel and emphasizes God’s grace through Christ. Jesus gave life and gave it freely. (CSB)

4:10 living water. Living water, in the spiritual sense, from Him, the fountain of life, a water to refresh the soul, a water that gives life. Christ's Word and His salvation, which are given freely according to the grace and mercy of God, were here offered to the woman of Samaria. (Kretzmann)

4:11 deep. Christian pilgrim sources as early as the fourth century mention a well in this area that was about 100 feet deep. When the present well was cleaned out in 1935, it was found to be 138 feet deep. (CSB)

4:14 never thirst. In contrast to the temporary satisfaction ordinary water brings. (TLSB)

4:14 welling up. This is a metaphor of a bubbling spring and pictures the life of the Holy Spirit within believers, which will come to full realization in eternity. (TLSB)

4:18 five husbands. The Jews held that a woman might be divorced twice or at the most three times. If the Samaritans had the same standard, the woman's life had been exceedingly immoral. Apparently she had not married her present partner. (CSB)

4:19 a prophet. With the recognition that Jesus must be a prophet (cf 7:39), the woman took a step closer to identifying Him as Messiah. (TLSB)

4:20 this mountain. Perhaps the woman did not like the way the conversation was going and so began to argue. The proper place of worship had long been a source of debate between Jews and Samaritans. Samaritans held that "this mountain" (Mount Gerizim) was especially sacred. Abraham and Jacob had built altars in the general vicinity (Ge 12:7; 33:20), and the people had been blessed from this mountain (Dt 11:29; 27:12). In the Samaritan Scriptures, Mount Gerizim (rather than Mount Ebal) was the mountain on which Moses had commanded an altar to be built (Dt 27:4–6). The Samaritans had built a temple on Mount Gerizim c. 400 B.C., which the Jews destroyed c. 128. Both actions, of course, increased hostility between the two groups. (CSB)

4:22 worship what you do not know. The Samaritan Bible contained only the Pentateuch. They worshiped the true God, but their failure to accept much of his revelation meant that they knew little of him. (CSB)

4:24 God is spirit ... worship in spirit and in truth. The place of worship is irrelevant, because true worship must be in keeping with God's nature, which is spirit. In John's Gospel truth is associated with Christ, a fact that has great importance for the proper understanding of Christian worship. (CSB)