

Pastor Geoffrey R. Boyle  
Lent III  
23 March 2014  
Grace-Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita  
Exod 17.1-7; Rom 5.1-8; Jn 4.5-30,39-42

*“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly...  
God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* (Rom 5:6, 8)

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*

The Exodus story brings the God’s people from their bondage under Pharaoh into the wilderness.

And after plagues and miracles, the Passover meal and a wall of water,  
they’d been promised great things:  
that God would be with them;  
that He’d provide for them and care for them and bless them with His presence.

But as they looked around and saw nothing but barren wilderness,  
they quickly became lonely and thirsty.

Where’s God’s now?

The loneliness and fear turned to bitterness and hate.  
They quarreled with Moses and tested God.

*“Why did you bring us up out of Egypt,  
to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?”* (Exod 17:3)

So Moses did what prophets do—  
he cried out to the Lord: *“What shall I do with this people?”* (17:4)

Moses thought he’d be sacrificed for the people—  
*“they are almost ready to stone me!”*

But Moses isn’t the sacrifice—that’d be God Himself.

He tells Moses to take his staff—  
the one that struck the Nile in front of Pharaoh, turning it to blood—and go.

Then God promised to stand before Moses on the rock at Horeb and Moses would strike the rock.

So Moses did just as the Lord commanded;  
and out of the rock poured streams of water, quenching their thirst.

So what’s the point?

The people lost faith that God was among them.  
They doubted His word of promise.  
They trusted their eyes, not their ears.

*“They tested the Lord by saying, ‘Is the Lord among us or not?’”* (17:7)

What's so miraculous about all this isn't just that a rock gave water—  
but the fact that God provided water to a people so undeserving.

He didn't first demand their change in life or even their apologies—  
He simply gave in to their demands.

What's more is that this isn't about plain water and being thirsty—  
it's about their lack of faith in His promise to be with them.

Here He shows His gracious presence among them by His self-sacrifice.  
Moses strikes God in front of all to see; and out comes living water.  
*“And the rock was Christ,”* Paul tells us (1 Cor 10:4).

So, as St. Paul says today,  
*“We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (Rom 5:1)

And that peace comes only through Christ the crucified.  
Not for those deserving, or having first cleaned themselves up—  
but, as Paul says, *“Christ died for the ungodly”* (5:6).

This wilderness story in Exodus is a story about you.  
About all of us who find ourselves stuck between the promise and the fulfillment—  
what we hear and what we see.

The same thing goes also for the Samaritan Woman at the well.  
Only this time, the story runs in reverse.

Rather than a grumbling people against their God,  
we have a wearied and tired God, asking for water from an ungodly woman.  
Rather than man testing God,  
we have God testing man: *“Give me a drink,”* He says (John 4:7).

But the woman is put off.  
*“How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?”* (4:9)

Now obviously, she misses the point.  
She doesn't see that the Exodus story is taking place in real time—only this time in reverse.  
She doesn't see that the Man before her is doing something much greater than simply breaking  
social taboo.  
But here again, the blessing of God comes only from His self-sacrifice, from His humiliation.  
It's not just a Jew seeking help from a Samaritan, and a woman at that,  
but it's God coming down to man, and sinful man at that.

Jesus said to 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.”* (4:10)

Thinking He's talking of plain water, she asks how He'll get it since He doesn't have a bucket.  
But Jesus says,

*"the water that I will give will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life."* (4:14)

When she hears this she starts to get it.

She starts to realize that she should be the one asking from Him:

*"Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."*

Like the Israelites, she's now put God to the test.

She's now demanded of Him what He's promised to give and do.

But in order to show her what kind of Christ and God He is,

He makes sure she has nothing in herself to lean on or trust in.

So He brings up her husband—or, husbands.

He leaves her totally dependent upon Him and His word alone.

This is what strikes the woman to the core.

She's left bare and vulnerable.

She's got nothing left but His promise.

She's now ready to have a Christ who dies for the ungodly.

And that's what we need, too.

We have this way of elevating God such that we see Him as something totally apart from us.

We speak of His power and might and awesomeness—but it's so distant from us.

We don't want to dirty Him with our simple desires, like for water or companionship.

We feel lonely and abandoned, but don't recognize that God dwells among His people.

We're so caught up in what we see and feel, that we forget what He says and does.

And we've missed the point.

We've forgotten that the wilderness story of the rock being struck;

and the Gospel story of the waters welling up to eternal life;

are both fulfilled in Christ the crucified.

Jesus breathed His last.

And to make sure that He was dead, the soldier took His lance and pierced His side,

and out came streams of blood and water.

Moses struck the rock and out came living water; *"And the rock was Christ."* (1 Cor 10:4)

The water from His side has poured out over you, creating faith by your baptism.

And the blood is now your drink, offering forgiveness, life, and salvation.

In these Holy Sacraments, Christ is with you.

You know that from His self-sacrifice—giving Himself to an ungodly people.

And so with the Samaritan woman we pray, *"Sir, give me this water"* and quench our thirst.

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*