

READINGS & PSALM

Exodus 17: 1 - 7

Romans 5: 1 - 11

John 4: 5 - 42

Psalm 95

INTRODUCTIONS

These may be included in the Parish Magazine, in the weekly service sheet, or by the lector as an introduction to the readings.

Exodus 17 : 1-7

Lent may mean some abstinence - but even in a desert we need water. This reading tells us how the Israelites were given water in their desert pilgrimage, when they looked to God to meet their need.

Romans 5 : 1-11

Paul's letter to Rome is much concerned with Christian conduct. This passage sets out the foundation for our conduct: our life now is our response to the extraordinary thing God has done for us, through Christ, flooding us with hope, grace, Holy Spirit and love. He calls us to exult.

John 4 : 5-42

God miraculously provided water for the Israelites on their desert journey. Now we hear of Jesus as living water. Among the Samaritan people whom the Jews hated, he convinces them that he himself is the Messiah, the fulfilment of all their needs.

PRAYERS

O God, the fountain of life, to a humanity parched with thirst you offer the living water of grace which springs up from the rock, our Saviour Christ. Grant your people the gift of the Spirit, that we may profess our faith with courage and announce with joy the wonders of your love. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Loving God, Lord of the Church, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word and deed: we have not loved you with all our heart or served you with all our strength; we have been blind to the vision of a renewed world and deaf to your call to costly discipleship; we have been indifferent to the suffering of others and unwilling to forgive one another. In your mercy, Lord, pardon and restore us, that together in the ministry of Christ we may serve you with joy all the days of our life. Amen.

God of eternity, you know how often we travel down the rocky roads of doubt and fear. We pester others with our worries; we hurl bitter words at those we love. We have chances to offer ourselves in service, but only give our contempt to those in need. We could share the living waters with the world, but want to store it in jars for safe-keeping.

Fountain of Grace, you turn towards us, to meet us wherever we are. You break open our rock-hard sin, so we might be made whole. In Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, our thirst for hope and joy is quenched. Amen

Almighty God,
give us such a vision of your purpose
and such an assurance of your love and power,
that we may ever hold fast the hope

which is in Jesus Christ our Lord

who is alive with with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God now and for ever. Amen

NZPB

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

1.

A: Let us offer our prayers trusting that the Holy One, who gives living water, will provide for all our needs, saying, "In Christ we pray," and respond, "Amen."

A: Let us pray for the church throughout the world.

P: God of Every Tongue, be with your Church that all who believe in you might learn more fully how to worship you in spirit and truth. In Christ we pray, C: Amen.

A: Let us pray for our Jewish and Muslim sisters and brothers.

P: God of Every Land, your desire for peace is not limited by geographical or historical boundaries, but embraces all people. Bless the people of the Middle East, that despite their history, they may grow together in truth and mutual respect. In Christ we pray, C: Amen.

A: Let us pray for all those who suffer because of discrimination.

P: God of Every Race, we pray that you might comfort those who are hated because of their colour or nationality. May those who have come to Canada find welcome here. May we who are free uplift the outcast and the oppressed. In Christ we pray, C: Amen.

A: Let us pray for forgiveness for failing to recognize Christ among us.

P: God of Every Time and Place, you reach out again and again to reveal yourself to us. Forgive us for the clutter of our lives that squeezes out any room for you. Like the Samaritan woman, give us faith that reaches out to meet you. In Christ we pray, C: Amen.

A: Let us pray for those who live in shame.

P: God of Every Soul, your love for us stretches far beyond our ability to imagine it. Open those who live in shame to a sense of your acceptance which encompasses every sin. In Christ we pray, C: Amen.

P: We give you thanks, God of Truth, for the faith of the Samaritan woman. Like her, we offer these prayers, trusting in the One who is a living well. Amen.

2.

Presider or deacon

To all who come to the well, God gives living water. As we make our journey to the paschal feast, let us earnestly pray to God for all who thirst and hunger.

Deacon or other leader

For the holy catholic church in every place, traveling the wilderness of this world.

Lord, have mercy.

Third Sunday in Lent - 27th March, 2011

For *N* our bishop, for presbyters and deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.

Lord, have mercy.

For all nations, peoples, tribes, clans, and families.

Lord, have mercy.

For the victims of greed and violence, and for all who are in need.

Lord, have mercy.

For the dying and the dead.

Lord, have mercy.

For our families, friends, and companions, and for all those we love.

Lord, have mercy.

Remembering *N* (*Parish patronal*), and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.

To you, O Lord.

Presider

Blessed are you, God of spirit and truth, who gave us the savior of the world. Receive the prayers we offer this day for those who seek new life in Christ and for all peoples everywhere; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

LECTIONARY NOTES

Exodus 17: 1 - 7

1.

The Historical Situation: The Israelites had only recently been slaves, for several generations, in Egypt, and for the most part had forgotten their ancestral religion. God's covenant with their patriarch Abraham seemed long ago and far away. Then this upstart Moses tells them that their ancient Lord has at last heard their cries, and is now leading their escape from Egypt back to their homeland. But this generation does not yet know the Lord. Oh, they've seen some mighty deeds, but they remember that in Egypt they at least were not thirsty.

Proclaiming It: When you relate the people's opening complaint, make them sound petulant. Then make Moses sound scared. He fears for his life and knows the success of this exodus depends on the people trusting the unseen God for an indefinite period.

Help your listeners form a clear mental image of what Moses is asked to do. Go before the mob, God tells him, "holding in your hand, as you go, the staff ... I will be standing there [invisible, even to you]... Strike the rock, and water will flow from it for the people to drink." When the Lord says "Strike the rock," your listeners should hear the "thwack" of oak on stone. Then pause.

The next sentence is quite matter of fact. "This Moses did, in the presence of the elders of Israel." The author doesn't even feel compelled to report whether or not "it worked," so great is his faith (in hindsight). You should say the sentence just that way.

2.

"Wilderness of Sin" - great image.

Human nature is so perfectly exhibited by the Israelites, isn't it? We tend to find things to gripe about no matter what is going on in our lives. "They are almost ready to stone me," Moses admits. Perhaps pastors sometimes feel that way when trying to lead congregations out of the wilderness and into the vision which God has laid before the people. How can we get over our griping, count our blessings, and forge ahead?

The name, Massah and Meribah, is summed up as indicating the question of the people, "Is the Lord among us or not?" Hopefully, that should be a rhetorical question: the answer is yes. And if God is among the people, then the people should respond, live, with faith.

By Beth Quick

Romans 5: 1 - 11

1.

What does "justified" mean?

What is the "faith" that gets us justified?

Why is faith the only right way? Are there no others?

In this context, "justified" means having justice, which is to say having a right relationship with God, and so enjoying God's favour. (To help English-speaking people avoid confusing this with the legal justice so important to us, some scholars translate the Greek noun as righteousness, and the adjective as "rightwised." It's a bit awkward, but it helps you get the meaning correctly.)

Saint Paul realized that he and all Jews who tried to keep the law of Moses were trying to become justified, but keeping the law wasn't an adequate method. What absolutely does not bring us justice is our own working at it. When in this reading Paul says "while we were still helpless," he's referring to our impotence before God, our inability to make ourselves worthy of God's favour, whether by good works, keeping the commandments, rituals or prayers.

Faith, then, is the admission that one cannot justify oneself, with the confident belief that God will grant us justice anyway. As Paul shows in the last sentence of today's passage, the death of Christ, for people not self-justified, proves that.

Paul calls our situation "this grace in which we stand." By "grace" he does not mean that metaphorical money in one's spiritual bank, or charge in one's spiritual battery, which some seem to mean when they throw around the term "grace." Rather, grace here means the gratuitous, unearned, undeserved character of God's approval of us. (The words gratuitous and grace have the same root in our language.)

2.

"Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God." That's interesting if --> then statement. Both parts on their own are not necessarily surprising, but that the first causes the second is an interesting play on words. What does it mean to have peace with God? Trusting that it is our faith, not our faulty, failing works, that brings us to God, and more than that, God's grace, then we can rest in peace (not just the RIP kind!) with God.

Third Sunday in Lent - 27th March, 2011

Suffering --> produces endurance --> produces character --> produces hope. "and hope does not disappoint us." I like Paul's logic here. It's sort of like those puzzles where you have to make the first word into the last word by changing one letter at a time like this: PAIL - MAIL - MALL - MILL - MILK

"and hope does not disappoint us." What do you think about that? Has your hope ever disappointed you? If you're like me, you can probably think of times that you would say, 'yes' to this question, so what does Paul mean here? Has your hope in God ever disappointed you?

"right time" - again, *kairos* : God's right time for action, not just any regular time.

"God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us." - straight from Paul to our Holy Communion liturgy.

By Beth Quick

John 4:5-42:

A lengthy reading, Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. This is a daring conversation for the woman: Jesus is a Jew, and a man. She converses with him at length, even though both of them cross social customs to do so.

Even though Jesus offers living water, he asks the woman first for a drink from the well. He asks her to give him something, even as he offers the immeasurably valuable to her. Give and take. I think God seeks that kind of relationship from us. Wants us to give, even though God can give to us so much more.

"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." Nice. Despite the divisions of Samaritans and Jews, or Catholics and Protestants, or Christians and Muslims, etc. Spirit and Truth.

"I am he." Another declaration of identity - common to John while rare in the other gospels.

"the fields are ripe for harvesting." I love the garden/vineyard/harvesting imagery that Jesus uses, even though I don't always understand it completely. How it must have sounded to his contemporaries who lived in such a society!

"for we have heard for ourselves" ah, another sign of human nature. We don't like to believe from another person's information. We always want to hear it first-hand, from a credible source. That's just sensible, right? It is hard to let go of those rules in order to come to belief through faith. Hard to figure out when it's right and when it's foolish...

By Beth Quick

WEB SOURCES

The Text this week

<http://www.textweek.com/yeara/lenta3.htm>

John Pridmore in The Church Times

Useful on The Woman at the Well

<http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=51931>

www.churchnewsireland.org

Anything can happen at a well

Sermon which starts with an illustration from “The Horse Whisperer” and links the characters of two women, one from the book and the other from the Gospel.

<http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/a-le03-keeping.php>

Episcopal sermon on the woman at the well which presents personal commitment as the focus of the encounter. This concludes, “As we move steadfastly toward Holy Week we remember that as the story nears its conclusion on the cross, Jesus is still thirsty. He is still thirsty today. And we are that Samaritan woman. We come to the well week after week. Week after week Jesus asks us for a drink. We know the kinds of things for which he thirsts.

“Are we ready to bring him a drink? Are we ready to talk with him? Are we ready to reveal our own brokenness to him? Do we make our full commitment to him?”

“Jesus is sitting before us right now. He is tired, very, very tired. He asks us to give him a drink. What shall we do?”

http://www.episcopalchurch.org/sermons_that_work_57929_ENG_HTML.htm