

Sunday 8th March 2026

The Third Sunday of Lent

Gospel Reading

John 4.5-42

So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'. (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered 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.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?' Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.'

Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come back.' The woman answered him, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right in saying, "I have no husband"; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!' The woman said to him, 'Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.' The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming' (who is called Christ). 'When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.' Jesus said to her, 'I am he, the one who is speaking to you.'

Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, 'What do you want?' or, 'Why are you speaking with her?' Then the woman left her water-jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, 'Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?' They left the city and were on their way to him.

Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, 'Rabbi, eat something.' But he said to them, 'I have food to eat that you do not know about.' So the disciples said to one another, 'Surely no one

has brought him something to eat?’ Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, “Four months more, then comes the harvest”? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, “One sows and another reaps.” I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour.’

Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me everything I have ever done.’ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there for two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, ‘It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world.’

Other Readings: Exodus 17.1-7

Psalm 95

Romans 5.1-11

Homily

Today is International Women’s Day, a day that invites us to notice stories that have been overlooked, voices that have been dismissed and gifts that have been underestimated. John 4 is exactly that kind of story, not because the woman at the well is idealised, but because she is seen, taken seriously and entrusted with truth.

Many of us will have heard this story so often that we can miss just how much is happening here, Jesus is tired, he sits down, he is thirsty and he asks a woman for a drink. Seemingly just an ordinary everyday event, a conversation in the heat of the day, and yet there is something quietly radical about this scene at the well. Notice where this encounter takes place, not in the Temple or in Jerusalem, but at a well; a place of daily labour, necessity, and survival. Notice the time: noon, the hottest part of the day, this woman is there when others are not. We don’t need to speculate too much, but John wants us to feel the social heat of this moment as well as the physical one. It is into this moment that Jesus meets her and gently crosses boundaries without fanfare: Jew and Samaritan, man and woman, rabbi and someone with a complicated reputation.

Bishop Stephen has called for churches across the Diocese to seek to raise the spiritual temperature- one way that we do that is to recognise that it does not begin with grand gestures, but rather it begins with presence, with attention, with a question that opens rather than closes: *“Will you give me a drink?”*

As he encounters the women at the well Jesus does not start by correcting her theology, he does not lead with moral judgement, but he starts with her need, with her vulnerability, and in doing so, he creates space for something deeper to emerge. As the conversation unfolds, the temperature rises, what begins as a practical exchange about water becomes a conversation about longing, about thirst, about worship, about truth and about life. “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,” Jesus says, “but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst.”

Jesus names what so many of us carry quietly: the longing for wholeness, dignity, and meaning. The woman said to him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming, when he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.’ Then Jesus said to her, ‘I am he, the one who is speaking to you.’ Here in the heat of the day, she encounters the Christ. Our gospel reading this morning is the longest recorded conversation Jesus has with anyone in the Gospels, perhaps shockingly to some it is with a woman, a Samaritan woman, someone whose testimony, in that culture, would not have been considered reliable. Yet she becomes the first evangelist in John’s Gospel. She leaves her water jar and runs back to the town. Not with a polished sermon or all the answers Just with a question *“Could this be the Messiah?”*

As we seek to raise the spiritual temperature, we must take note that it is not about turning up the volume, but that it's about turning up the courage to listen, to see, to believe that the Holy Spirit is already at work in unexpected voices. To recognise that God entrusts good news to those who have been marginalised, dismissed, or silenced.

As we mark International Women's Day, this Gospel asks us some gentle but searching questions. Whose voices do we still struggle to trust? Whose experiences do we quietly discount? Where might Jesus already be sitting, waiting, asking for a drink — inviting us into a conversation that could change us?

Raising the spiritual temperature begins when we dare to meet one another honestly, across difference, in the heat of real life. When we trust that God's living water flows through unexpected channels. And when we believe that no one is too marginal, too complicated, or too ordinary to become a bearer of good news.

Because when living water is shared, thirst is named, and voices are released, the temperature rises — and life begins to grow.

Conversation Questions

1. Where might Jesus already be sitting, waiting, asking for a drink — inviting us into a conversation that could change us?
2. What would it look like for your worshipping community to raise the spiritual temperature?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

Collect of the day

*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.*

(or)

*Eternal God,
give us insight
to discern your will for us,*

*to give up what harms us,
and to seek the perfection we are promised
in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

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