

OPENING COLLECT

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. **Amen.**

FIRST READING: Exodus 17.1-7

1 From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. 2 The people quarrelled with Moses, and said, 'Give us water to drink.' Moses said to them, 'Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?' 3 But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, 'Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?' 4 So Moses cried out to the LORD, 'What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.' 5 The LORD said to Moses, 'Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.' Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarrelled and tested the LORD, saying, 'Is the LORD among us or not?'

General Introduction:

Christians are called to decide for God and to live a life of obedient trust, whatever happens in their life. In brief to be Abrahamic rather than Adamic. St John's gospel is taking the lead on these Sundays in Lent, and it may be a good thing to 'catch our breath' this week and look at how John is using the stories of Jesus to encourage us to do just that. The opening of John's Gospel seems to deliberately parallel the opening chapter of Genesis. The prologue speaks of the Kingdom as a new creation, ("In the beginning ..") and makes the exultant proclamation that the light, which has never been overcome, has broken out afresh in Christ. The new age of the Kingdom is here; we can experience the new life now. So, John the Baptist identifies Jesus as the Messiah, saying "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 2.), and those looking in the right direction, like Nathanael (1.43ff.), recognise Jesus. Others, like Nicodemus (last week), are not so sure. Then, in a series of extended stories or discourses, John shows that, in this new Kingdom, God is **dependable**, providing for his people all that is necessary for life.

SECOND READING: Romans 5.1-11

1 Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 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. 3 And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 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. 6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person - though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. 8 But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. 9 Much more surely: then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. 10 For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son,

Here, 'water', as he did in the wilderness (Exodus 17) and, then, in ch.6, 'manna', for Jesus is 'the bread of life' and 'the living water'. So, for all those who can see and hear, this is the time of the Kingdom- and this is the new life, the 'life eternal', which all can experience. However, coming to belief may be challenging and take time, as John demonstrates through the talk Jesus has with Nicodemus (How can this be..?- last week's Gospel), and, again, here at the well in Samaria (Where is your bucket..?!). It is only as the conversation goes on that the woman realises to whom she is talking and fetches others, who also come to belief ("we know that this is truly the saviour of the world"). They too believe and find life.

Similarly, Paul, after his startling conversion, spends

Epistle continued:

much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. 11 But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation

Gospel: John 4.5-42

5 Jesus came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. 7 A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.' 8 (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) 9 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.) 10 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.' 11 The woman said to him, 'Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? 12 Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?' 13 Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 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.' 15 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.' 16 Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come back.' 17 The woman answered him, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right in saying, "I have no husband"; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!' 19 The woman said to him, 'Sir, I see that you are a prophet. 20 Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.' 21 Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 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. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.' 25 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.'

time working out the implications of the new life. We see this in Romans, where he wrestles with problems about justification and the place of the Law, but, in this passage, he expresses his confidence in a **dependable God**, who has brought us into new life through Christ. He asserts that we have peace, and encourages his hearers to enjoy their new life in Christ.

Perhaps our Lenten prayer should be one of thanksgiving for the love of God experienced in Christ and that we, too, may learn to depend on Him and have the confidence to speak and live the life of love, so that others may come to belief and be drawn into communion with God, in the Kingdom.

Gospel continued: 26 Jesus said to her, 'I am he, the one who is speaking to you.' 27 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?' 28 Then the woman left her water-jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, 29 'Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?' 30 They left the city and were on their way to him. 31 Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, 'Rabbi, eat something.' 32 But he said to them, 'I have food to eat that you do not know about.' 33 So the disciples said to one another, 'Surely no one has brought him something to eat?' 34 Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. 35 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. 36 The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. 37 For here the saying holds true, "One sows and another reaps." 38 I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour.' 39 Many Samaritans from that city believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I have ever done.' 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there for two days. 41 And many more believed because of his word. 42 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.'

Post-Communion Collect:

Merciful Lord, grant your people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow you, the only God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**