



Westminster Presbyterian Church
Eugene, Oregon
“At Home” Worship
Third Sunday of Lent: March 15, 2020

Gathering Around God’s Word

If you are worshipping with another family member or with children, you are invited to have different voices share and read the various parts of the service.

Call to Worship

Come, you who are thirsty—
here is living water.
Come, you who are weary—
here is the fount of eternal life.
Let us drink from the well of grace.
Let us worship the Lord!

Opening Hymn *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah* #65

The Word

Prayer for illumination

Living God, as we read your Scriptures this morning, help us to remember that we are joining with many in many different places. You transcend space and time and are with us all. By the power of your Holy Spirit, may we hear for ourselves the good news, and believe because of your Word. Amen.

Scripture Readings

Old Testament Reading: Psalm 95: 1-7

- ¹O come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
- ²Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!
- ³For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.
- ⁴In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also.
- ⁵The sea is his, for he made it, and the dry land, which his hands have formed.
- ⁶O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!
- ⁷For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. O that today you would listen to his voice!

New Testament Reading: John 4:5-29

- ⁵So Jesus came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.
- ⁶Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. ⁷A 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.) ⁹The 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.) ¹⁰Jesus 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." ¹¹The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?" ¹²Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" ¹³Jesus said to her, "Everyone who

drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but 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.” ¹⁵The 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.”

¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come back.” ¹⁷The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; ¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!” ¹⁹The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.” ²¹Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²²You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” ²⁵The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” ²⁶Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

²⁷Just 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?”

²⁸Then 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?”

Today is the third Sunday of our Lenten journeys to the cross and ultimately to the joy of Easter. I think I have now written this sermon/reflection 4 different times over the course of this week. Due to the nature of the week and the COVID-19 pandemic declaraton, it just kept changing. And truth be told, by the time I send this all to you, it may need to be changed again. But, within the ever changing news and voices of our time, we can lean on God's word to us in Scripture—the word that does not change, but remains steadfast.

The news, however, is hard to keep up with right now. We see a volatile economy, countries shutting down, schools, businesses, large gatherings, conferences, theaters, sports, etc. are all being cancelled. People are being advised to practice social distancing or not go out at all if they are in the high risk groups. David and I have been in close conversation with the session over the past few weeks and we did not want to suspend public worship or close the church building. But, by the end of the week, even our presbytery sent an email guiding all Presbyterian churches in our presbytery to cancel worship and close.

Those of you reading this today may have very different views of this whole situation. Perhaps you are very concerned and thankful the church has made the decision to close. Or maybe you are of the opinion that this whole thing has been blown out or proportion and you don't understand why we aren't together today. Or maybe you feel like the verdict is still out—you see the dangers and the fear but you also wonder how everything will look 3, 6, or 12 months from now.

No matter what type of approach you are taking to this situation, I think we can all agree that there is a deep sense of fear and anxiety within our community and our world and that anxiety rubs off on all of us. People are

sick. People are dying. People are confused. People are panicking. People are afraid. And this is when we can and we must turn to our faith in God.

You may be living with a great deal of anxiety and fear right now especially if you are in a high risk group or you have loved ones who are. You may be questioning your upcoming travel plans or just more aware about how you go about your daily life. You or your loved one may live in a retirement community or assisted care facility and be fearful of how quickly and dangerous this virus can spread in a community like that. You or a loved one may be a medical care provider dealing with great unknown and a healthcare system that seems to have more holes than we originally ever thought. You may be fearful about the economy or how to pay your bills should you have to stay at home and not work for an extended period of time. There are so many unanswered questions right now that fear and anxiety are obvious responses.

I have no easy answers or words —but I can and I will point all of us to Jesus today and to our scripture reading. In fact, it is essential that the church shines the light of God into our hurting, fearful world.

We have before us a story of a woman at a well drawing some water going about her daily life when she encounters Jesus who asks her for a drink. She is taken aback by his request since she is a Samaritan and he is Jewish. Samaritans were political, social and religious outsiders. For him to speak to her in broad daylight was a bold statement indeed. Much has been studied and written about this text, but today, I want to focus on what Jesus offers the woman and hence what he offers each of us. Perhaps this approach will be more simplistic, but sometimes simple is what we need. We need to be able to break off a little piece of the text and allow it to resonate from deep within us.

Jesus offers the woman and all of us so much. One of the first things he offers her is a break from societal norms. She was talking to a Jewish man in broad daylight! In Christ all that divides us falls away. Jesus invites everyone into the life of faith. Jesus calls **all of us**—no exception.

He welcomes her fully knowing her past and this is key. We humans often feel unworthy because of things we have done or left undone. Jesus knows all the things she has done and he welcomes her anyway. Jesus knows our deepest fears and anxieties. Jesus knows our pain. Jesus knows our sin. Yet, Jesus welcomes us still offering us, just as he did the woman at the well, the gift of living water and grace.

Jesus is here today doing the same for us. He meets us where we are. He welcomes us knowing all the dark things we have done—knowing all the doubts we have. He gives us all we need to share our faith with others; to go and tell; to be a light; to have hope. And he gives us the gift of living water and grace. It is a gift that is deep and abiding and sure. It is a deep well that will not run dry. It nourishes our souls and our bodies reminding us of our identity as beloved children of God.

We live in a broken, hurting world—even before the age of coronavirus. There is destruction both natural and human made, there is pain and suffering and grief. There are so many things that divide us—that seek to tear us down. There is always disease and illness and fear. And there is always the deep abiding love of God as shown to us in Jesus Christ. God is with us all the time walking with us through the deep, dark, scary places. We know the Bible calls us not to worry—we also know that we are human and worry often seems to be our middle names. But Jesus reminds us that he is here—offering us a living water—and everyone who drinks it will never be thirsty again.

Jesus is always with us offering us the gift of living, life changing water. We may find that the next few weeks become overwhelming and full of fear. But Jesus is with us in every place. Like the woman at the well, he meets us where we are. He is with us at home, he is with us if we are in the hospital, he is with us at work, he is with us at any place. He is with all of today as we worship from all sorts of different locations.

Come to God and drink from the deep well of Christ—come and find rest for your weary souls, come find a peace that surpasses all understanding, come find a joy that allows us to proclaim the good news of Christ to our hurting world. Come and find a welcome that says—you are enough, just as you are. Come and abide in Christ knowing that he is with us all the time especially in times of doubt, sorrow, pain and uncertainty. Jesus is there, inviting us. All we have to do is listen, drink, and be forever changed. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Reflection Together

Each time we gather together as a youth group, we take time sharing our highs and our lows together—what was the best thing about your day/week? What was the worst thing about your day/week? Another way to ask this is “when did you feel closest to God or when did you drink of living water?” or “When did you feel most far away from God, when did you feel like living water was hard to find?” If you are sharing this worship opportunity with someone else or with your family, take a few minutes now to share your “highs and lows.” If you are alone, can you call a family member or friend and do this? Once everyone has shared, pray the following prayer together:

Responding to God’s Word

Prayers of the People and the Lord’s Prayer

**Gracious and Loving God,
We thank you for the many blessings that you have given us in our lives. We come to you this morning with our prayers for each other and for our world. We thank you for the gift of your church. Help us remember that we are together even if we have to be apart for a while. We lift prayers for our church community...**

We pray for our health care workers, leaders, school systems, communities, families, hospitals—for all of us as we discern how best to go about our daily lives in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. We especially pray for those all over your world who are sick and for those places where daily life has become compromised.

We pray for those who are overcome with anxiety, grief and worry. May they feel your presence and love.

We lift our prayers for those we know and do not know who are suffering today whether in body, mind or spirit. Grant them the peace that only you can provide. We remember those who are on our hearts today....

Oh God, sometimes there are not words for our feelings, but we know you are there and you understand. You know the words of our deepest thoughts and yearnings and we give you all those things that are keeping us from enjoying the good news that you have given to us all. We pray all this in Christ's name who taught us to pray:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver

us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Sending of God's Word

Closing Hymn: *I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say #182*

Charge and Benediction

We will gather together again as a church, but in the meantime remember that Jesus is with you wherever you are offering you the gift of living water and grace. Go in peace today to love and serve the Lord knowing that you are a beloved child of God forgiven, loved and freed. Amen.