

Grace Episcopal Church  
Third Sunday in Lent  
Rev Brian C Justice  
March 8, 2026

Exodus 17.1-17  
Romans 5.1-11  
Psalm 95  
John 4.5-42

### Living Water

On his journey north from Judea to Galilee, Jesus travels through Samaria, a region settled by the remnants of the northern tribes of Israel after the Assyrian conquest in 722 BC.

To the Jews, the Samaritans were in every way “other.” They were even worse than “other,” they were “less than.” They intermarried with the Assyrians. They adopted Assyrian customs. They followed their own version of the Torah and rejected the rest of the Hebrew Bible. They ignored the religious establishment of the Temple in Jerusalem. They were, from the Jewish perspective, unholy, unclean, untouchable.

That historical background provides the context for today’s Gospel text: the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s Well in Samaria.

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Jesus says to her, Give me a drink.  
She says, You’re a Jew and you’re asking me for a drink?

Jesus answers in a way that establishes each of them as a giver and a receiver.  
He says, If you knew the gift of God, and who is speaking to you now, you would ask me for a drink of living water.  
Jesus is establishing an interdependence, a mutuality between them - a kind of Trinitarian flow, Richard Rohr calls it.

But she is still skeptical. She looks at the deep well and then looks at him dismissively.  
She says, Man, you ain’t even got a bucket!

Jesus passes right through her dismissal of him and establishes again the relationship between them.

He says, I am talking about living water. I am talking about a spring of water *within you* that gushes up to life.

She says, Give me this water.

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Embodying the incarnate love of God, Jesus does two remarkable things in his encounter with the Samaritan woman.

First, he establishes a relationship with her by *being with* her. Jesus was at the well first. Then she arrived. He knew she was a Samaritan woman. But he did not leave her. He did not condemn her. He spoke to her. He asked her for something. He was *with* her.

Second, he shifts her vision - and ours - from the physical well in the ground to the spiritual well in the heart. Jesus, in fact, says more about this wellspring in the Gospel of John. Later, at a Jewish festival in Galilee, he says to the crowd, Out of the heart ... shall flow rivers of living water. (John 7.38)

The water that quenches your deepest thirst and that gives you the abundant life you long for is already yours. It flows and gushes up from within your heart.

As he does in the familiar parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus is teaching a radical teaching to the people in his society. If the living water is present in the heart of a Samaritan woman, then it is present in the heart of every single person, regardless of difference or status.

As we journey through the desert of Lent these forty days and nights, let us remember that we are not in a desolate land.

Streams of living water are flowing.

They are flowing within us.

Come.

Drink.

And live.

Amen.