

# 8<sup>th</sup> March 2026 – Morning Service

## Third Sunday in Lent

Rev Andrew Sankey

### Call to Worship: Psalm 95: 6-7

Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;  
for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.

### StF 24 – Come now is the time to worship

Come, now is the time to worship.

Come, now is the time to give your heart.

Come, just as you are to worship.

Come, just as you are before your God,

Come.

One day every tongue will confess You are God.

One day every knee will bow.

Still the greatest treasure remains

For those who gladly choose You now.

*Brian Doerksen © 1998 Vineyard Songs*

### Prayer

Loving God, stir our hearts that we may worship you, touch our hearts that we may love you. quicken our hearts that we might recognise your presence with us and be equipped to know and serve you always. We come gladly, praising you for your grace and goodness.

We come with sorrow, acknowledging that once again we have strayed from your ways like lost sheep, ignoring your guidance and flouting your will. Forgive us, and in your mercy help us to start again. Draw near, increase our faith, deepen our commitment and strengthen our love so that we might live and work for you to the glory of your name. **Amen.**

### Reading: Romans 5: 1-11

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

## StF 436 – What shall I do my God to love

- 1) What shall I do my God to love,  
my loving God to praise?  
The length, and breadth, and height to prove,  
and depth of sovereign grace?
- 2) Your sovereign grace to all extends,  
immense and unconfined;  
from age to age it never ends;  
enfolds all humankind.
- 3) Throughout the world its breadth is known,  
wide as infinity;  
so wide it never passed by one,  
or it had passed by me.
- 4) My trespass was grown up to heaven;  
but, far above the skies,  
in Christ abundantly forgiven,  
I see your mercies rise.
- 5) The depth of all-redeeming love  
what angel tongue can tell?  
O may I to the utmost prove  
the gift unspeakable!
- 6) Come quickly, gracious Lord, and take  
possession of your own;  
my longing heart vouchsafe to make  
your everlasting throne.

*Charles Wesley*

## Reading: John 4: 5-42

So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?' (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?' (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.'

'Sir,' the woman said, 'you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?'

Jesus answered, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.'

The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.'

He told her, 'Go, call your husband and come back.'

'I have no husband,' she replied.

Jesus said to her, 'You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.'

'Sir,' the woman said, 'I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.'

'Woman,' Jesus replied, 'believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.'

The woman said, 'I know that Messiah' (called Christ) 'is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.'

Then Jesus declared, 'I, the one speaking to you – I am he.'

The disciples rejoin Jesus

Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, 'What do you want?' or 'Why are you talking with her?'

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 'Come, see a man who told me everything I've ever done. Could this be the Messiah?' They came out of the town and made their way towards him.

Meanwhile his disciples urged him, 'Rabbi, eat something.'

But he said to them, 'I have food to eat that you know nothing about.'

Then his disciples said to each other, 'Could someone have brought him food?'

'My food,' said Jesus, 'is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Don't you have a saying, "It's still four months until harvest"? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying "One sows and another reaps" is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labour.'

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I've ever done.' So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers.

They said to the woman, 'We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world.'

### **A meditation by the Samaritan woman on this meeting by Nick Fawcett**

Here's a funny thing:

one minute that Jesus fellow was asking me for water,  
the next he was promising me the water of life,  
bubbling up within, a spring that never runs dry,  
meeting my deepest need.

Very odd. I should never have taken him on,  
asking who he thought he was -

a Jew talking to a Samaritan like that,  
a man approaching woman on her own –  
for suddenly it was me placed on the spot  
and him asking the questions;

me apparently who was thirsty,  
and he who could meet my need.

I was confused and yet drawn in,  
his words at once fascinating yet a puzzle,  
for they revealed things above and secrets below,  
holding out promise but also challenge.

He grasped better than I, my inner longings  
and knew my every fault,

yet despite them all,

he seemed ready to grant me the blessings of which he spoke.

I still can't work it out,  
for he made the first move,  
apparently wanting my help, if only a cup of water,  
yet I left feeling that whatever I might give him  
he could offer me far more.

### StF 248 – I heard the voice of Jesus say

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| 1) I heard the voice of Jesus say:<br>'Come unto me and rest;<br>Lay down, O weary one,<br>lay down<br>Your head upon my breast.'<br>I came to Jesus as I was,<br>Weary and worn and sad,<br>I found in him a resting-place,<br>And he has made me glad. | 2) I heard the voice of Jesus say:<br>'Behold, I freely give<br>The living water; thirsty one,<br>Stoop down and drink and live.'<br>I came to Jesus, and I drank<br>Of that life-giving stream;<br>My thirst was quenched,<br>my soul revived,<br>And now I live in him. | 3) I heard the voice of Jesus say:<br>'I am this dark world's Light;<br>Look unto me, your morn<br>shall rise,<br>And all your day be bright.'<br>I looked to Jesus, and I found<br>In him my star, my sun;<br>And in that light of life I'll walk,<br>Till travelling days are done. |
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*Horatius N Bonar*

### Sermon

The town where our Bible reading today is located is in the West Bank. An area of conflict today, but also a region of tension in the days of Jesus. It is an area designated as Palestinian control but Jews are making settlements there are trying to drive the Palestinians off that land by violence.

When the Israelites were led out of Egypt by Moses, they were 40 years on that journey before they took possession of the promised land -It was ruled by Judges for a number of years until the people asked for a King like other nations. King Saul. King David and King Solomon were the first three. On Solomon's death, his two sons divided the Kingdom up South / North, Judea / Samaria, it was about 930 years before Christ. The Samaritans were descendants from the northern tribes and developed different traditions with focus on worship at Mt Gerizim. For Judah, they were Jews from the tribes of Benjamin and Judah and the focus was on Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. Hence the tension in the time of Jesus. The shortest way to travel from Jerusalem to Galilee or Nazareth, was due North though Samaria, but many Jews would choose to travel east first and then North up the Jordan Valley avoiding Samaria and potential conflict.

Jesus and his disciples had been in Jerusalem, it was still early on in his ministry. The Pharisees in Jerusalem were getting worried that Jesus was attracting attention (We heard last week that one of their number (Nicodemus) had visited Jesus at night. Jesus decided it would be best to be back in Galilee as the time was not right. Jesus took the short route approximately 80-90 miles by foot – about 3 days travelling. In the heat of the day Jesus rested by a well in a shady spot while his disciples went to get provisions from the nearby town. I remember from my visit to Israel that being out in the sun, and walking, you needed plenty of water and so that was the topic of conversation. Most people would come to the well in the early morning or late afternoon when the sun was not so hot, so someone getting water at midday was unusual. This woman was obviously not welcome at the popular times of day because she had been ostracised because of her wrong doing. To her amazement this man, speaks with her, not telling her off, not shouting at her, but asking her for a cup of water. As we see from the meditation above, she is confused, bewildered. Jesus, a Jewish man, initiates the relationship across ethnic, gender and social norms. She queries whether Jesus really means that he can provide living water, which allows Jesus to give her a glimpse of something more, which draws the woman into the conversation –“if you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water!” Today she might have responded “I don't believe it!!” She actually said, “you've got nothing with which to draw water,

where will you get this water". She refers to their common (Jew and Samaritan) ancestor Jacob, who provided this well and she obviously doesn't think Jesus is greater than Jacob.

Jesus then explains the "living water" – the Holy Spirit – is a spring of water welling up to eternal life. The woman is intrigued – she longs for this something more – a thirst that will always be quenched. Jesus has taken the conversation to a deeper level. But there is still more that Jesus wants to do – he looking for change in direction of this woman's life – to lift it out of the mundane getting of water to quench immediate thirst, and to lift it out of the pattern of regularly broken relationships in her life – Jesus goes personal – "Go and get your husband."

She admits that she has no husband – which Jesus already knew but wanted her to be honest about it – and Jesus shares what he knows about the mess of her broken relationship. Although Jesus does this in a very matter of fact way, it must have been intensely uncomfortable for the woman, so she changes the subject and talks about the controversy between Jews and Samaritans – where should worship be held, Jews insist on Jerusalem, but Samaritans used the local mountain near this well, Mt Gerizim. Jesus quickly deals with this change of subject, taking the sting out of the controversy, by saying place doesn't matter where we worship – it's our attitude to worship – worshipping in spirit and in truth - these are true worshippers. The woman is amazed at this man's understanding of her and of worship and of God himself, so she shows her own faith by saying "I know that Messiah is coming. When he comes he will explain everything to us" Jesus responds "I, the one speaking with you - I am he." He has made a declaration.

What happens next is the woman goes of and tells the villagers what has happened. Her testimony is: "Come, see a man who told me everything I have ever done. Could this be the Messiah?" And many come, many hear for themselves and believe. The testimony of an ostracised woman is powerful on her community – she is rehabilitated and the community is transformed. Jesus and his disciple then continue their journey back to Galilee.

Our reading from Romans 5 talks about the peace and hope that the woman at the well experienced because that that meeting with Jesus in her dryness. A life that was empty and barren was transformed by God's spirit at work. In that passage Paul says that "we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us"

How do we apply this story to our lives:

- Jesus wants to meet you in your "noon hour" period of dryness. Jesus knows where you are with him (even the ugly messy bits that no one else knows about, but Jesus does).
- Release any guilt and shame by embracing Jesus's accepting revealing love.
- Break down barriers that hinder cross-cultural conversations (ethnic, gender etc).
- Encourage personal testimony of how Jesus meets our deepest needs.
- Revisit worship practices (personal and corporate) to emphasize both "spirit and truth" over location, style, tradition.
- Identify groups in the community around us who traditionally are not part of our "circle" and seek conversations that point to Jesus.
- Pray for opportunities to discuss living water with others and find ways of expressing how the Spirit satisfies.

## Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for your love – the joy, hope and peace you daily give. Thank you for the strength, mercy and blessing you unfailingly provide. but most of all, thank you for asking nothing in return except that we receive that we open our hearts to you in glad and grateful response and accept what you long to shower upon us. Help us to celebrate the generosity of your grace, the fullness of life you so freely offer. **Amen.**

## StF 338 – There is a redeemer

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| 1) There is a Redeemer,<br>Jesus, God's own Son.<br>Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,<br>Holy One.                                | 2) Jesus my Redeemer,<br>Name above all names,<br>Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,<br>O for sinners slain.         |
| <i>Ch) Thank You, O my Father,<br/>For giving us Your Son,<br/>And leaving Your Spirit till<br/>The work on earth is done.</i> | 3) When I stand in glory<br>I will see His face,<br>And there I'll serve my King for ever<br>In that holy place. |

Melody & Keith Green © 1982 Birdwing Music

## Prayers of Intercession

Merciful God, we pray for those who walk through life with a sense of guilt, burdened by past mistakes, overwhelmed by a sense of failure, troubled by feelings of shame, depressed by the knowledge of their own weakness. Help them to understand that in you they can find true forgiveness and a new beginning. In your mercy, **hear us.**

We pray for those who commit evil with no sense of wrongdoing no concept of sin, no hint of remorse, no sign of scruples. Help them to glimpse what is right and good, and to be touched by the renewing, transforming grace of Christ. In your mercy, **hear us.**

We pray for those who have been wronged by others; hurt, deceived, betrayed, let down. Help them to be ready to forgive others as you have forgiven them. In your mercy, **hear us.**

We pray for those whose relationships are being tested with family and friends, with those at work or in their place of leisure with other Christians, even in their own fellowship. Help them to understand the cause of the division between them and to work towards healing of all such rifts, forgiving and seeking forgiveness. In your mercy, **hear us.**

Merciful God, help those who are burdened by past mistakes to discover the forgiveness you so freely offer and to show that mercy themselves. In your mercy, **hear us. Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

## StF 481 – The Lord's my shepherd

1) The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;  
He makes me lie in pastures green,  
He leads me by the still, still waters,  
His goodness restores my soul.

*Ch) And I will trust in you alone,  
And I will trust in you alone,  
For your endless mercy follows me,  
Your goodness will lead me home.*

*Stuart Townend © 1996 Thankyou Music*

2) He guides my ways in righteousness,  
And he anoints my head with oil;  
And my cup - it overflows with joy,  
I feast on his pure delights.

3) And though I walk the darkest path -  
I will not fear the evil one,  
For you are with me, and your rod and staff  
Are the comfort I need to know.

## Blessing

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy - to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and for evermore! **Amen.**

## The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. **Amen.**