

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT
MARCH 8, 2026
"GIVE US WATER"



St. John United Church of Christ

10207 Lincoln Trail
Fairview Heights, IL

Telephone 618-397-6323

e-mail– stjohnuccfairview@gmail.com

Website: www.stjohnfairview.org

Rev. Rosemary Captain

Email: revrosemarycaptain@gmail.com

Pianist – Tami Hughes

Liturgy – Rev. Dr. Chad Abbott

Ushers -

(NCH) New Century Hymnal - CCLI LICENSE #11164431

*Please stand if comfortably able.

Respond with words in bold print.

SUMMARY OF SCRIPTURE TEXTS

From "Preaching Through the Christian Year" Fred Craddock

Water is the dominant motif of the texts in today's readings, leading in various ways to reflection upon human need and divine grace.

Exodus 17:1-7 this is one of many accounts of the people of Israel complaining in the wilderness, in this case because of thirst.

Psalms 95 the psalm, a liturgy of praise, responds directly to the Exodus passage, celebrating God's care for God's people and admonishing them with the example of the complainers in the wilderness.

Romans 5:1-11 Paul presents a picture of endurance in suffering that contrasts with that of Israel in the wilderness, and celebrates God's love in Jesus Christ as the foundation for rejoicing.

John 4:5-42 the account of Jesus at the well in Samaria, offering living water to the Samaritan woman.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:

THE BELL IS RUNG:

PRELUDE:

PENNIES FOR MISSION:

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

One: God of sea and sky, you keep the earth flourishing.

Many: We come before you weary from traveling through barren lands.

One: Holy One, you give water that sustains body and spirit.

Many: You hydrate us when we need, how we need.

One: Miracle Worker, you caused a rock to crack and bring

forth water.

Many: Crack our hearts open and let your love flow from them like a spring.

***INVOCATION:** Holy One, we are thankful for who you are and all that you are. Your presence is desired here. We take joy in knowing that you are as close to us as our next breath. We thirst for you. May we be filled to overflowing with your love. Amen

***OPENING HYMN: 329 “Jesus, the Joy of Loving Hearts”**

***UNISON PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE:**
Enduring Presence, we confess that sometimes we question if you are among us or not. Sometimes we quarrel with you when we are tested. These are the moments when our outlook needs transformation. You are gracious in looking beyond our faults to see our needs and meet them. Thank you for your immeasurable grace. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

New mercies are granted daily and every day we have an opportunity to be changed forever and for good. Amen.

***GLORIA: Glory to the Creator, and the Christ and the Spirit so near. As it was from the start so it shall be forever, One God always here. (repeat two more times.) (end) One God always here. One God always here.**

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

FIRST TESTAMENT READING: Exodus 17:1-7

Water from a rock

17 The whole Israelite community broke camp and set out from the Sin desert to continue their journey, as the LORD commanded. They set up their camp at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ²The people argued with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.” Moses said to them, “Why are you arguing with me? Why are you testing the LORD?”

³But the people were very thirsty for water there, and they complained to Moses, “Why did you bring us out of Egypt to kill us, our children, and our livestock with thirst?” ⁴So Moses cried out to the LORD, “What should I do with this people? They are getting ready to stone me.”

⁵The LORD said to Moses, “Go on ahead of the people, and take some of Israel’s elders with you. Take in your hand the shepherd’s rod that you used to strike the Nile River, and go. ⁶I’ll be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Hit the rock. Water will come out of it, and the people will be able to drink.” Moses did so while Israel’s elders watched. ⁷He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites argued with and tested the LORD, asking, “Is the LORD really with us or not?”

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 95 Page 683

EPISTLE LESSON: Romans 5:1-11

Therefore, we have peace with God

5 Therefore, since we have been made righteous through his faithfulness, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ²We have access by faith into this grace in

which we stand through him, and we boast in the hope of God's glory. ³ But not only that! We even take pride in our problems, because we know that trouble produces endurance, ⁴ endurance produces character, and character produces hope. ⁵ This hope doesn't put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

⁶ While we were still weak, at the right moment, Christ died for ungodly people. ⁷ It isn't often that someone will die for a righteous person, though maybe someone might dare to die for a good person. ⁸ But God shows his love for us, because while we were still sinners Christ died for us. ⁹ So, now that we have been made righteous by his blood, we can be even more certain that we will be saved from God's wrath through him. ¹⁰ If we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son while we were still enemies, now that we have been reconciled, how much more certain is it that we will be saved by his life? ¹¹ And not only that: we even take pride in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, the one through whom we now have a restored relationship with God.

***GOSPEL: John 4:5-42**

⁵ He came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, which was near the land Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there. Jesus was tired from his journey, so he sat down at the well. It was about noon.

⁷ A Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me some water to drink." ⁸ His disciples had gone into the city to buy him some food.

⁹ The Samaritan woman asked, "Why do you, a Jewish man, ask for something to drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" (Jews and Samaritans didn't associate with each other.)

¹⁰ Jesus responded, "If you recognized God's gift and who is saying to you, 'Give me some water to drink,' you would be asking him and he would give you living water."

¹¹ The woman said to him, "Sir, you don't have a bucket and the well is deep. Where would you get this living water? ¹² You aren't greater than our father Jacob, are you? He gave this well to us, and he drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."

¹³ Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks from the water that I will give will never be thirsty again. The water that I give will become in those who drink it a spring of water that bubbles up into eternal life."

¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will never be thirsty and will never need to come here to draw water!"

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Go, get your husband, and come back here."

¹⁷ The woman replied, "I don't have a husband." "You are right to say, 'I don't have a husband,'" Jesus answered.

¹⁸ "You've had five husbands, and the man you are with now isn't your husband. You've spoken the truth."

¹⁹ The woman said, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you and your people say that it is necessary to worship in Jerusalem.”

²¹ Jesus said to her, “Believe me, woman, the time is coming when you and your people will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You and your people worship what you don’t know; we worship what we know because salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the time is coming—and is here!—when true worshippers will worship in spirit and truth. The Father looks for those who worship him this way. ²⁴ God is spirit, and it is necessary to worship God in spirit and truth.”

²⁵ The woman said, “I know that the Messiah is coming, the one who is called the Christ. When he comes, he will teach everything to us.”

²⁶ Jesus said to her, “I Am—the one who speaks with you.”

²⁷ Just then, Jesus’ disciples arrived and were shocked that he was talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?” ²⁸ The woman put down her water jar and went into the city. She said to the people, ²⁹ “Come and see a man who has told me everything I’ve done! Could this man be the Christ?” ³⁰ They left the city and were on their way to see Jesus.

³¹ In the meantime the disciples spoke to Jesus, saying, “Rabbi, eat.”

³² Jesus said to them, “I have food to eat that you don’t know about.”

³³ The disciples asked each other, “Has someone brought him food?” ³⁴ Jesus said to them, “I am fed by doing the will of the one who sent me and by completing his work.

³⁵ Don’t you have a saying, ‘Four more months and then it’s time for harvest’? Look, I tell you: open your eyes and notice that the fields are already ripe for the harvest. ³⁶ Those who harvest are receiving their pay and gathering fruit for eternal life so that those who sow and those who harvest can celebrate together. ³⁷ This is a true saying, that one sows and another harvests. ³⁸ I have sent you to harvest what you didn’t work hard for; others worked hard, and you will share in their hard work.”

³⁹ Many Samaritans in that city believed in Jesus because of the woman’s word when she testified, “He told me everything I’ve ever done.” ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹ Many more believed because of his word, ⁴² and they said to the woman, “We no longer believe because of what you said, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this one is truly the savior of the world.”

MESSAGE: “Faith is Not Stagnant; it is Alive”

Most of the time, when we read a novel or watch a mystery story on television, we don’t learn about the plot or message of the story, until the very end. I’m going to change that “rule” today. I’m going to tell you about the message from the very beginning. Today’s message is about faith. You may recall Jesus’ message about having

the faith the size of a tiny mustard seed, but can grow by way of reading, hearing, conversation and experiencing the message Jesus brings us. In today's Gospel story we hear how that can happen.

When traveling through Samaria, Jesus stops to rest at a well while the disciples go into town to buy food for all of these travelers. A Samaritan woman comes to the well to draw water. Unfortunately, the author does not give us her name. Jesus and this woman have a long conversation, actually the longest recorded conversation in the entire Bible. Throughout this encounter we can note the stages in the movement of the woman's faith.

At first the conversation seems to hold no promise the two being distanced in race, gender, and religion. Again the author of the Gospel of John adds double meanings to his text. Jesus says "water" and she says "water", but the subjects are not the same. However, the conversation moves to a deeper level as this man (Jesus) is compared to Jacob, who had drawn water from this well without having to put a bucket down the well to draw the water out. According to legend, living or bubbling water rose to the surface for Jacob.

Now the woman is asking Jesus for the water he can give. The conversation deepens further as the woman recognizes Jesus as a prophet. Her faith in him as a prophet is based on his having supernatural knowledge. Jesus knows all about her past and present situation as wife and divorced. In the author's church, believing Jesus has special powers is not sufficient, for she has not yet "seen his glory"; that is, see him as the revelation of God. At this point, the woman, apparently uncomfortable, tries to be evasive by

introducing the tensions between Jewish and Samaritan religions. It is an old ploy; when on the spot, begin an argument. The maneuver failed, the woman expresses a hope in a coming Messiah, and Jesus responds, "I am".

It's a question whether Jesus' response "I am" should be translated, "I am he"; that is, "I am the Messiah you have been looking for." After all, in this particular Gospel Jesus is not simply the Messiah; he is that and more. Jesus is God's presence among the people looking for a Messiah. The expectation of a Messiah had become corrupted and distorted by social, cultural, and political definitions of Messiah. We've talked about that before. Many people thought the Messiah should be a soldier on a white horse and with a large sword to conquer over all the Romans and others who oppress the Jews.

At any rate, there is no clear indication of the degree or shape of the woman's faith. Notice she told others about this encounter with this man but she used a question. "He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" as we can read in verse 29. Her characterization of Jesus was of a man "who told me everything I have ever done". However, a word needs to be said about her as a witness. She may not have arrived at a full faith in Jesus as son of God, but she witnessed to the extent of her faith that she had. Others were invited to affirm what for her remained an uncertainty. "He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" And the point is, her word about Jesus initiated a relationship between others and Jesus, the fruit of which was a faith beyond her own. They said, "We know that this is truly the Savior of the world". Had she waited until her own faith was full grown, that remarkable conclusion to this story would have been abandoned.

Jesus abides (a key word in John indicating the strongest and deepest level of faith) two days at the request of the people in the Samaritan town. I have a feeling hearing Jesus for all that time affected many to increase their faith. Can you imagine?

In this Gospel, there are various kinds and qualities of faith. Growth is possible if the believers “abide” (accept what they hear and witness) and strengthen their faith. No amount of faith is so new, so partial, so unclear that witnessing to Jesus Christ out of that faith is inappropriate.

It starts with faith the size of a mustard seed but can grow large enough to enter the kingdom of God. Amen.

HYMN: 456 “More Love to You, O Christ”

PASTORAL PRAYER: Beginning with silent personal prayer
Gracious God, source of life, we come to worship as those who have found a spring of water and return to satisfy our thirst again and again. Refresh our spirits by your Spirit; through Jesus Christ, your Son. And we are grateful that you care for us even in our brokenness. Praise be for your graciousness.

God of all nations, forgive our biases and prejudices, our refusal to have dealings with those of other races and orientations of which we do not approve. Excuse our religious one-upmanship that seeks to exalt our own persuasion at the expense of others and that would rather debate non-essentials than find common ground and concerned action. We are convinced that we are right, and stubborn in resisting any evidence that we should change

our minds. Soften such hardness of heart with the warm love of your Spirit.

We pray for our nation as our leaders have chosen to send us into war where none of us can survive. We pray instead that we may be united in our commitment to liberty and justice for all. Preserve truth, widen understanding, encourage dialogue, facilitate negotiation of differences, and prosper our farms and industries.

God of health and peace, give peace to troubled minds and anxious hearts. Be with those who struggle for wholeness in their physical and mental health. We especially pray for those on our prayer list. Comfort the bereaved and heal those who are sick. Receive into ultimate peace those who are dying.

Let all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you. Let those who love your salvation say evermore, “God is great!” We pray all these things in the name of your Son, Jesus . . .

THE LORD’S PRAYER:

Our Creator 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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

PRAYER RESPONSE: 773

Remember me, remember me, O Jesus, remember me.

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:

God gives of Godself freely, so let us give freely to God. Let us bring gifts that sustain the life of the kingdom. May these resources be more than enough. Amen.

OFFERTORY:

***DOXOLOGY:**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above you heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

***UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND THANKSGIVING:**

Fount of Blessing, receive our gifts in the joy that we give them. Be it time, tithe, or talent, it all comes from you. Thank you for blessing us to be a blessing to you and each other. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: 197 “Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross”**

***BENEDICTION:**

As you depart this space, remember that the God who caused water to flow from a rock is the same God who walks with you. Go forth with the assurance that in the midst of a chaotic world something good can happen and something good will happen. Amen.

***BENEDICTION RESPONSE: 571**

“O God of Love, O God of Peace”

O God of love, O God of peace,

Make wars throughout the world to cease.

The wrath of human wrong restrain;

Give peace, O God, give peace again!

THE BELL IS RUNG:

POSTLUDE:

PRAYER LIST: