

Sermons

“Is the LORD Among Us or Not?”

March 15, 2020

As we "hunker down" and wait for this madness to subside, let us be in prayer for those suffering in this time.

Let us pray

For those who are experiencing financial insecurity,
Lord, provide.

For the most vulnerable among us, who are at risk of
disease, hunger, lack of shelter, lack of support,
Lord empower us to come to their aid.

For those suffering from anxiety and stress,
Lord, give them your peace.

For those who work in the medical fields,
Lord, protect them and guide them as they care for the sick.

For those who are sick,
Lord, bring forth your healing.

And for those who have lost loved ones,
Lord comfort them.

We pray all these things in Jesus name, Amen.

Exodus 17:1-7

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. 2The people quarreled 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?” 3But 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?” 4So Moses cried out to the Lord, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.” 5The 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. 6I 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. 7He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

John 4:5-42

5So he 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?" 30They left the city and were on their way to him. 31Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." 32But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." 33So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?" 34Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. 35Do 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. 36The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. 37For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' 38I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor." 39Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." 40So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. 41And many more believed because of his word. 42They 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 Savior of the world."

Is the LORD among us or not? That was the question God's people asked while they journeyed through the wilderness. God had rescued them from captivity in Egypt in a most dramatic way and was leading them by stages to the Promised Land. But things went sour quickly once they got thirsty.

Have you ever been thirsty and unable to quench that thirst?

When I was in Israel last May, I managed to find myself lost, out of water, no map, and carrying a dead cell phone. How I got to this point in my life is a long story that I won't get into here. The point is this, I was walking up and down hill after hill in the heat of the day with no water in sight. I couldn't help but think about Jesus at the well.

The One of whom John speaks in the beginning of his Gospel, *He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.* John 1:2-5

The Christ was hot, exhausted and thirsty. He sat with his back against Jacob's well and waited. He had no bucket, so he waited. Was he tempted to "miracle" his way out of this suffering? Maybe. But temptation had been concurred at the outset of his ministry. So, what was he waiting for?

Her.

Here she comes. Bucket in hand, water jar in the other. She is alone. In so many ways she is alone. But her head is held high. She is strong and she is faithful.

Can you imagine what she thought when she saw a stranger, a man, an actual Jewish Man sitting by the well? I know what I would be thinking, "Oh, here we go. What is he doing here?" Then he actually speaks to her, for heaven's sake! She's Samaritan, he's Jewish! What is happening right now?!

The conversation that follows quickly turns from physical thirst and literal water to something deeper. Something soul deep. She is having a conversation with the One. The One through whom ALL things came into being. The One who brings forth Light and Life.

And there he sits, the Light of the World, covered in dust, lips chapped and voice hoarse from thirst talking to her. Talking to her about her life, her loneliness and the darkness that has overcome her. Because he knows everything about her, she sees him for who he really is. The Messiah! And he is offering her New Life!

As I sat on a curb in Jerusalem, lost, hot and thirsty, cursing my dead cell phone and poor navigational skills, I thought about Jesus and the well. Here I am in Jesus' homeland and I'm dangerously thirsty. I guess the location drove the point home that Jesus knows, from experience, about my thirst. Not only that, Jesus is acquainted with all my sorrows, my sins, my darkness. He knows everything about me.

He knows everything about you too. And he is offering us Life Anew each and every day.

The Israelites wondered the wilderness lost and thirsty. In frustration and panic they cried out to Moses asking if they had been abandoned by God. "Is the LORD among us or not!" Can you relate? God led Moses to the sacred mountain, to a rock that would provide life giving water for the people.

The life-giving water we seek, comes from the Rock that is Christ Jesus. If you find yourself asking the same question that the Israelites asked, then I suggest that you remember Jesus at the well. The Samaritan woman saw him but he saw her first and he saw her completely. He invited her to ask for Life. He invites us to do the same. This is a gift he freely offers. Why? Because, that is what the Light of the World does.

Keep this truth close to you. *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it!* Amen.

Prayer

Lord, you have made a way for us to receive your gift of life. Give us eyes to see the One who, from the beginning, brings forth all life. Give us ears to hear his call to us. Give us hands and feet to go out into the world and proclaim to others, "Come and See." In Jesus name, Amen.