

Collect, Readings and Reflection for 08 March 2026, the 3rd Sunday of Lent

Collect (*the Church's prayer for today*):

Eternal God,
give us insight
to discern your will for us,
to give up what harms us,
and to seek the perfection we are promised
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings: Romans 5:1-11; John 4: 5-42

Today's reflection is by Reader, Pete Gillions.

The first thing to note in the gospel reading is that Jesus intentionally went to where the woman in the story was. That Jesus came to her. The whole message of the gospel is that we do not climb up to meet with God, rather that He comes down to meet with us. Too often we imagine that we need to make a journey to meet with Him when He is actually there all the time waiting to welcome us with arms open wide. I wonder if that is how we see Jesus. More likely we are like the woman at the well, feeling that while might be true for other people, it is not true for us?

So let's take some time to put ourselves in the shoes of the woman Jesus met at the well. She was a Samaritan woman, a person shaped by broken relationships, unmet longing, and quiet social exclusion. She had been married five times, and the man she was with now was not her husband. In her culture, that detail mattered deeply. This was not casual information. It was serious social exposure.

Yet Scripture never presents her as scandalous for spectacle's sake. It presents her as thirsty.

Her five marriages were not just a personal failure, they reflected a pattern of searching.

In the ancient world, women rarely initiated divorce. Her story likely involved abandonment, death, survival, and vulnerability. Still, the number carries symbolic weight. Again and again, she sought security, belonging, and life in human relationships that could not sustain her.

We may not have had five marriages, but I wonder where we have looked for security. Is it through work, success, affirmation, relationships, productivity, pleasure, control, even ministry. We keep returning to the well, different jars, same thirst. Where am I thirsty? Consider the "wells" you have been drawing from that still leave you spiritually dry. But what makes this story astonishing is not her past. It is Jesus' posture. A Jewish rabbi speaks to a Samaritan woman, alone, at noon; it's to be frowned upon by people of their time. But He did not avoid her. He did not lecture her. He did not begin with her failures. He began with thirst.

“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.” (John 4:10)

Here stands Jesus, not guarding holiness, but offering Himself. He names her story fully, nothing hidden, nothing softened, yet He does not withdraw. He tells her the truth without rejecting her, something religion often fails to do. Jesus did not say, “Fix your life, then come back.” He said, in effect, “I know your life, and I am here now.” That is the gospel moment in this story, isn't it? She is not called because she is clean. She is called because she is fully known.

And so, afterwards, the woman who came to the well avoiding people, becomes the woman who runs back to her village proclaiming truth. Her testimony is not polished theology, it is lived encounter: “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did.” (John 4:29) Notice, not “a man who shamed me,” but “a man who told me everything.” And again, this is our story too. We were once, and often are, that Samaritan woman. Returning to empty wells. Carrying jars that never stayed full. Ashamed enough to come alone. Hopeful enough to keep drawing water anyway. And still Jesus meets us. Not at the temple. Not after self-improvement. But in ordinary places of daily survival. He still calls people who are tired of pretending.

He still offers living water to those who have tried everything else. He still reveals Himself to the thirsty even before we sort ourselves out. Because the gospel is not about hiding our emptiness, it is about finally bringing it to the One who can fill it. And the water He gives does not run dry.

We are people of hope, a hope is found in what Christ has done, is doing and will one day complete. This is at the heart of our faith and is seen in the meal that Jesus asks us to remember him by. The woman at the well was offered living water. We are similarly offered the bread of life and the cup of salvation by Christ. In communion we proclaim His death, reminded that Christ opened His arms of love wide on the cross and suffered death that death might be defeated. In communion we proclaim Christ's resurrection that shows us that love overcomes even hatred, that evil and loss do not have the last word. Death is defeated.

And finally in communion we proclaim Jesus will come again in glory when all things, including ourselves will be put right. This is an energizing hope that calls us to act. In the words of the Eucharistic prayer:

“Lord of all life, help us to work together for that day when your kingdom comes and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.” Bringing something of heaven to earth. In the encounter between the woman at the well and Christ she glimpsed something of heaven been brought to earth, giving her and expansive view of God's love and acceptance. We are invited to see that same expansive view of God. A God who calls to us: ‘Come to me, all who are weary and whose load is heavy; I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble-hearted; and you will find rest for your souls.’

Amen