



St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
Sunday, 12 March 2023 – Lent 3
Readings: Exodus 17: 1-7 & St John 4: 5-42
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

Can we break the mould?

The reading from Exodus demonstrates that in terms of human behaviour, what goes around comes around in every generation and yet, God's loving provision continues. Through Moses, God had released the Israelites from the tyranny of Egypt and was guiding them towards the Promised Land, which means crossing the desert wastelands. Inevitably, the Israelites become thirsty but instead of praying to ask God to give them patience as he steers them towards an oasis with abundant water, they quarrel, victimising themselves trying to manipulate him. We might think what monumental ingratitude. However, reflecting on our own behaviour we know how easy it is to quarrel with people, be they members of our own family or, within the family of the church. Lent is a good time to discern if our quarrels have any merit or, whether we too have fallen into the victimhood trap, testing God and others.

When you point a finger three fingers point back at yourself

Moving forward to the Gospel Jesus too is in an arid space, not because the territory he has walked into is dry but because of the history of quarrels between the Jews and Samaritans. To set the scene the fall-out goes back centuries to the break-up of King David's hard-won kingdom after his son Solomon's reign. Those in the northern part of the kingdom broke away from the South appointing their own king. The northerners were the first to be taken into captivity by the Assyrians. They inter-married and on returning to their homeland they were effectively half Jew, half gentile. Further, they set up their own sites of worship rather than attend the Temple in Jerusalem. To the Jews in the south this was contemptible, quite forgetting that they had been deported to Babylon and had lived as Babylonians. On returning to Jerusalem, the reconstruction of the temple was far from their minds, their first thought was rebuilding their homes, reordering the land for cultivation, and establishing commerce. Yet, even then, the temple remained in ruins for years longer.

To walk away or stay ...

In the Gospel, seemingly, it's not the people but Jesus, God's Son, who's thirsty. Breaking taboos he asks a Samaritan woman for a drink and by so doing gains her

full attention for she says, "How come you a Jew, ask a drink of me, a Samaritan woman!" This is the pivot point in the account. Jesus has spoken to her not in a place of worship, the temple or, a synagogue but at a well, a place of everyday life. He then uses the ordinary to expound the extraordinary helping the woman to see the divine in his life and find salvation in his words. As a Samaritan she might have taken umbrage and told him to fend for himself but she doesn't. Intrigued, she tests Jesus by picking upon the ethnic and religious quarrels still flaring between their nationalities. To answer her, Jesus looks beyond the past and present towards the future when bricks and mortar will not be what anchors people to faith but God's Spirit living within them, wherever or, whoever they may be. She then concedes that the Messiah is to come to redeem people. Next, she receives the greatest gift of her life as Jesus confirms that he is the Messiah. The effect on her is immediate, she discerns the integrity of his words, accepts them as truth and leaving her pot of water behind, she runs back to the city to draw people to the Water of Life. We heard that many Samaritans believed in Jesus because of her testimony. All good until the disciples return from the market. They're astonished that Jesus has been chatting to a Samaritan woman but do not question him openly, instead, they focus on practical issues urging him to eat. Jesus knows what they are thinking and with great patience urges them to expand their parched minds and slake their spiritual thirst daily with the Water of Life welling up from his very words, but still they don't quite get it.

Our point to ponder

Lent reminds us that Sunday sipping from the surface of the Water of Life is best supported by plunging in daily to prayer and reading the Bible to grow our faith: then we can serve God more effectively to refresh others seeking him.

Question: How spiritually hydrated are we? Amen.