

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT [A]

Exodus 17: 3 – 7

Romans 5: 1 – 2, 5 – 8

John 4: 5 – 42

We know and love Jesus, don't we? He who said to the Samaritan woman at the well: "Those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life." Jn. 4: 14

And, although we know Jesus, who is the source of eternal life, so often we:

"Go through life parched and empty, standing knee deep in a river dying of thirst."

McDill, Jones & Lee: Standing Knee Deep In A River (Dying Of Thirst)

And that's just what the People of God are doing as they travel through the desert on their 40-year journey to the Promised Land.

They're now at a place called Rephidim, and don't have any water.

And they'd forgotten they: "Were once slaves in Egypt, but the Lord [their] God brought [them] out with his strong hand and powerful arm, and with miraculous signs and wonders [and would give them] a land flowing with milk and honey." Dt. 5: 15 & 26: 8 – 9

Forgotten that: "The eternal God is [their] refuge, and his everlasting arms are under [them]." Dt. 33: 27 To hold them safe and secure, and to provide for their every need.

Yes, they were certainly thirsty; and there would have been no problem in their going to Moses, and asking him to intercede with God on their behalf as their need was real.

But they didn't: they quarrelled with, and grumbled to, Moses, and were even ready to use violence against him.

So Moses: "Called the place Massah (*testing*) and Meribah (*quarrelling*) because the Israelites quarrelled and because they tested the Lord saying, 'Is the Lord among us or not?'" Ex. 17: 7

By now, because they'd had so many experiences of His love, they should have known full well God was with them; but they lacked faith – they failed to trust Him – to care for them.

Paul reminds us in the second reading that: "We have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory." Rm. 5: 1 – 2

Yet, in a real sense, we can, more often than not, behave like the People of God did at Rephidim.

We know how good the Lord is to us, but we take it for granted.

We even grumble at Him, and quarrel with Him, because we think we're having a hard life – I know I do sometimes.

But: "When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners." Rm. 5: 6 Paul says in the Letter to the Romans.

And yet, despite knowing the depths He plumbed out of His eternal love for us, we still: "Go through life parched and empty, standing knee deep in a river dying of thirst."

But, if we really believed, and knew in our hearts, that Jesus has given us: "A fresh, bubbling spring within [us] giving [us] eternal life." Jn. 4: 14 how different our relationship with Him would become.

And, if we cultivated that friendship with Him, from that friendship would flow a completely different attitude to the way we live our lives, because the Holy Spirit will have made His home in our hearts.

And Paul tells us just that: "We can [he says] rejoice when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love." Rm. 5: 3 – 5

In Luke's Gospel we meet Simeon when Joseph and Mary take Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem 40 days after His birth.

"The Holy Spirit was upon him and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah [the Saviour]." Lk. 2: 25 – 26

In a sense, the Samaritan woman at the well reminds me of Simeon; although her searching is after an unnamed, and unknown someone she can't comprehend – yet.

I think she's a woman who's been deeply disappointed in love. She's had five husbands, and now she's living with another man.

We'd probably be inclined, at best, to steer clear of her; and, at worst, condemn her for her promiscuous behaviour.

And yet she's still longing to meet the right man, hoping that he's going to fill up the longing that's deep-down inside her.

She doesn't suspect for one minute that when Jesus asks her for water, she's found the right man at last. He's a man who knows who she is, and what she's done, but He doesn't leave her in her pain.

He doesn't call her names or condemn her; instead, He looks into her soul, and tells her the truth about what her life is really like.

Then Jesus goes on to tell her the truth about who He truly is; and in telling her, He gives Himself away to her.

He gives her living water: that: "Fresh, bubbling spring within [her], giving [her] eternal life." Jn. 4: 14

Eternal life – beginning in this life, but stretching on into eternity – with Jesus, the true man, the right man.

The 'someone' she's been longing for all her life: and it changes her.

She will never be the same again.

She found the God, who wants to recreate us into His: "Work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning he had meant us to live it." Eph. 2: 15

So, what can we take home this evening/morning from our encounter with Jesus, and the Samaritan woman?

That God loves you just the way you are. If you think His love for you would be stronger if your faith were stronger, you're wrong.

If you think His love would be deeper if your thoughts were deeper, you're wrong.

The love other people have for us decreases with our mistakes; yet, Jesus' love never decreases.

Though we spurn Him; reject Him; despise Him; disobey Him, He will never change His love for us.

Our evil can't diminish His love for us; our goodness can't increase it; our faith doesn't earn it.

Jesus doesn't love us less if we fail, or love us more if we succeed.

His love is limitless and eternal.

And, we can know that with a certainty, because of the words Jesus spoke to the woman at the well: "Those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life." Jn. 4: 14

When, through the Spirit of Jesus dwelling within us, we experience that deeply in our lives; then we'll never again: "Go through life parched and empty, standing knee deep in a river dying of thirst." McDill, Jones & Lee: Standing Knee Deep In A River (Dying Of Thirst)