

feel deep within even when the world seems to be raging all around us. We call it *the peace that passes understanding* because in the eyes of the world, *it doesn't make sense*. We gain that peace by drinking deeply of the water that Jesus offers us, and this we do by prayer, the reading of scripture, and the receiving of Sacraments, those outward and visible signs of God's inward and spiritual grace. Whenever we intentionally connect to Jesus, the living water flows.

Water sustains life and the living water that Jesus gives sustains life eternally. When we drink from Him; when we give ourselves to Him; when we follow Him; we grow into Him, becoming daily more like Him. Jesus never leaves us. In good times and in bad, Jesus is with us. In sickness and in health, Jesus is with us. Living or dying in this world, Jesus is with us. And whether our lives in this world are long or short, Jesus is with us. He came that we might have life. He promises that where He is, we shall be as well.

Lent teaches us that like the ancient children of Israel, we are on a journey. That journey will last our entire lifetime on earth, and will take us from darkness to light, from sin to salvation, from earth to heaven. Like the children of Israel, we can expect to encounter some difficulties along the way. But when we do, let us not complain as they did and put God to the test. Rather, let us return—again and again, if need be—to Jesus Christ, and with grateful hearts, drink deeply from the water of eternal life that He alone gives us.

Χάρις τῷ θεῷ, εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος. Ἀμήν

LECTIONS: Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 95; Romans 5:1-11; John 4:5-42

LENT 3

2014-03-23

PARISH OF GEORGINA—S. JAMES' CHURCH

Have you ever made a long journey with a small child? It can be a test of endurance, to be certain. For many years when I was a boy, we used to travel from our home in Richmond Hill up to Blind River, where we rented a cottage for two weeks. I adored that part of the country, and for my older brother and me it was always an adventure. *Getting there* was another matter! Although in those days we didn't have seat-belts, I still found our 1951 Mercury to be uncomfortable after the first hour. As the pain in my nether regions increased, so did the number of times I would ask, "Are we there yet? How much longer?" *Whine, whine...*

In a way, the whole congregation of Israel were like young children. They had only recently been set free from their bondage in Egypt to travel to a new land, promised by God through His servant Moses. Only three days into the journey, the complaints began. Like children, they whined, "I'm thirsty. I'm hungry. Why did you bring us into the desert anyway? Are you trying to kill us?"

Fast-forward to today's reading. It is now some months since they left Egypt. God had already sweetened a pool of bitter water for them to drink. He had provided quails and manna for them to eat. As they moved on through all the dust and scorching sun, their water began to run out again. But rather than go to Moses with a simple request or a status report on their supplies, the people quarrelled with him. *Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?* So Moses went to the Lord, and the Lord—as always—provided the solution. We might be forgiven for wondering which of the miracles recorded here was greater: getting streams of water from the rock at Horeb or the Lord's infinite patience with His problem children!

The subject of water comes up again in our Gospel reading.

Jesus had just arrived at a Samaritan city and was tired and thirsty, so He asked a local woman to draw some water for Him from the well. This began a lively conversation about the relationship between Jews and Samaritans (they hated each other) and about Who it was that was actually asking the woman for a drink.

Have you noticed that Jesus never wastes time getting to the point? *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,* He said. [+Jn 4:10]

Jesus is God's gift to the world. Paul reminds us why Jesus came into the world. *God proves His love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us...* [Rom 5:8] That was always the plan. God sent His only Son into the world to save sinners, the likes of you and me. And like the Samaritan woman, we don't always recognise Jesus in our midst. It seems to be only when He is revealing something about us, or when He is giving us something, that our eyes are opened and we see Jesus for who He really is: the living Son of the living God.

About the water from the well, Jesus said, *Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give them will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.* [+Jn 4:13-14]

God provided water from the rock at Horeb to quench the physical thirst of a nation on the move. That was a miracle forever to be remembered in the history of Israel. But truth to tell, drunk water and eaten bread are soon forgotten, as the appetite and thirst build up again. Providing for our physical needs is only one of the myriad ways in which God cares for us. And He does so out of the kindness of the divine heart, out of

His great love for us. And still we forget...

What Jesus promised the Samaritan woman, and what He promises us, is the permanent slaking of a thirst so deep and so profound within us, that we shall never forget how this thirst came to be satisfied. Jesus describes spiritual water, that when we drink from it, is not eliminated from the body but rather becomes a great internal spring of water that continues to sustain and nurture life now and forever.

What might this water look like? First, it is the water of *His love* for us. We all need to feel that we are loved, don't we? We all need to feel that we have some worth in the eyes of those around us. Jesus treats us like the Samaritan woman. As with her, He does not accuse us of the base things we have done, the errors we have made, the sins we have committed. He may *identify* these things in our lives, but if He does, it is always with the same kind of love and respect that He showed to her.

How can I be sure of this? Because, as Scripture says, *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.* [Heb 13:8] The Bible gives us many opportunities to see Jesus at work among the people. The only ones He condemns are the ones who actively oppose His mission on earth.

The spiritual water that Jesus gives us is *a sure confidence for the future*. As we read last week, Jesus came into the world, not to condemn the world but to bring it to eternal life. His mandate was to seek and save everyone whom the Father had given Him. That mandate never changes. If God created us, then Jesus saves us. That is the blessed assurance of our faith. Our relationship with Him begins here and now, and continues throughout eternity.

Another quality of the spiritual water offered by Jesus is *peace*. He gives us the peace that passes understanding, the peace we