

Dear Friends in Christ,

There is a great story in the Gospel reading, the woman at the well.
A few years back I wrote a dialogue filling out this too brief story.
You might enjoy it. And here are the readings.

YIC

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THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

Year A

Exodus 17:1-7

All through their wilderness experience, the children of Israel seem to do nothing but whine and complain. Massah and Meribah mean proof and contention respectively. This is a thread through much of the Hebrew Scripture, linking place names to historic incidents.

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

I think the theological point of this story is to graphically demonstrate that we survive, even exist, not by our own will but by the grace of God. This is a theme that is very common in Hebrew Scripture. Put generally, the success of the children of Israel is not due their sterling character, their uncommon wisdom, their excellence in battle or any other human attribute but only by the grace of YAHWEH.

Psalm 95

Not listed as a Psalm of David, this is called a liturgy of God's kingship. Notice that it is written in the first person plural.

1. Come, let us sing to the LORD; *
let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation.
2. Let us come before his presence with
thanksgiving *
and raise a loud shout to him with psalms.
3. For the LORD is a great God, *
and a great King above all gods.
4. In his hand are the caverns of the earth, *
and the heights of the hills are his also.
5. The sea is his, for he made it, *
and his hands have molded the dry land.
6. Come, let us bow down, and bend the knee, *
and kneel before the LORD our Maker.
7. For he is our God, and we are the people of his
pasture and the sheep of his hand. *
Oh, that today you would hearken to his voice!
8. Harden not your hearts,
as your forebears did in the wilderness, *
at Meribah, and on that day at Massah,

when they tempted me.

9. They put me to the test, *
though they had seen my works.

10. Forty years long I detested that generation and

1. What image of God is portrayed here? (Be blunt, God can take it.) _____

2. What is our responsibility? _____

said, * "This people are wayward in their hearts;
they do not know my ways."

11. So I swore in my wrath, *
"They shall not enter into my rest."

Romans 5:1-11

Paul is still illustrating justification by faith.

Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person-- though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

1. Who did Christ die for? _____

a. So do we need to earn grace through good deeds? _____

2. So, since Christ has died for our sins known and unknown and they are all forgiven, how should we then live? _____

John 4:5-42

This is such a great story and it shows Jesus sense of humor. "Living water" to the Jews meant running water in streams and from springs and was supposed to be superior to water from ponds or wells. In this case, it was high summer and a dry time when all the creeks had dried up. The Samaritans were a people of mixed blood as a result of being conquered by the Assyrians. This made them an anathema to the Jews.

Jesus came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The 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.) Jesus 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." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well,

and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" Jesus said to her, "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 will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." The 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."

Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But 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. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

Just 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?" Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" They left the city and were on their way to him.

Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do 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. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They 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."

1. Is it important to Jesus where you worship? _____

a. What is important?

2. What do you think the metaphor of harvesting and "one sows and another reaps" is about?
