

## AT HOME WORSHIP – March 15, 2020

### **PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP** – Take a minute or two of quiet to prepare for worship **CALL TO WORSHIP**

*We come to the well of fear and doubt.  
We have drawn deeply of those waters.  
We come to the well of anger and hate.  
These waters flourish in all the land.  
Lord, bring us to the water of peace and hope.  
Lord, bring us to the well of salvation. AMEN.*

### **A BRIEF CONFESSION**

*In honesty of heart and humbleness of spirit, we come before God in confession.  
You search us, O Lord, and you know us well.  
We seek your pardon, we ask your forgiveness, we need your mercy.  
Forgive us where we've failed, heal us where we are broken.  
Cast us not away from your presence. Renew a right spirit within us.  
Our faith in the living Christ assures us that God's pardon is real, God's healing  
deep. AMEN.*

### **GREETING**

*May the Lord be with you in this time of coming before God.  
May this time of worship be as a stream of living water for our spirits.  
Lord, give us this water always. AMEN*

### **WORD**

### **SCRIPTURE READINGS**

1<sup>st</sup> reading Exodus 17:1-7

*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 quarrelled 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 quarrelled and tested the Lord, saying, 'Is the Lord among us or not?'*

### Psalm 95:1-3,6-8

*O come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!  
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!  
For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.  
O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!  
For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.  
O that today you would listen to his voice!  
Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,*

### Gospel reading – John 4:5-42

*So he 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 worshipped 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 worshippers 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 for 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.’*

## **SERMON**

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent

John 4:5-42

PAGE 1

## **CENOTE**

In Mexico, the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico to be more precise,

**Screen 1**



there are these natural wonders called

“cenotes” a Spanish

word of Mayan origin meaning “well” ... these are fresh water sink holes created by underground rivers.

They form in two ways:

- 1) Through erosion causing the ground above the water to become so thin that, at a certain point, it collapses in on itself. The underground river is then exposed to the surface.
- 2) When the water level of the underground river is too low and ceases to provide support for the ground above ... the ground then collapses in on itself with the same effect of opening the surface of the earth to the river below.



Screen 2

The net effect, in the end, is that water gathers in these spots, its color is

a crystal clear turquoise, and the temperature is a very pleasant 78 degrees ... when sunlight filters down through the sink hole, it creates a beautiful and mystically magical visual effect.

PAGE 2



Screen 3

The Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico

is very flat and one can come upon a *cenote* in a very unassuming way only to be surprised at the sudden presence of water and extreme beauty.

It is estimated that there are over 5000 *cenotes* in the Yucatan with only around 1200 being registered ... which is to say, that happening upon one can be an exhilarating

experience of discovery, they are considered by indigenous people as sacred spaces.



Screen 4

The woman who, surprisingly, ran into Jesus at the well of Jacob that we read about today ... in effect, it was like she happened upon a *cenote*, she came upon sacred and living water in Jesus.

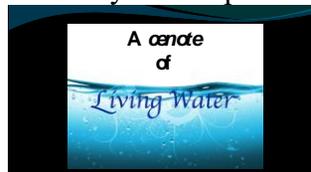
Jesus has been like this underground river of water coursing through Palestine ever since his ministry began ... his teachings (like the waters of a *cenote*) had the effect of eroding away long-held and misguided ideas about God, worship, and what God desires of us.

For instance,

his healing ministry worked at eroding away the social stigma that went along with being a victim of illness; his ministry to the outcast, the poor, and despised eroded away cultural notions of who was inferior, evil, or outside the realm of God's love; his teaching ministry that caused people to think about a loving & forgiving God eroded away taught notions that God exacted punishments commensurate with misdeeds done.

In these ways ... an interaction with Jesus was like coming upon a *cenote*. People were caught unaware that they were in the presence of (in this case) "living water"

When some ill or crippled person stumbled into the presence of Jesus and was healed ... it was like they came upon a *cenote* of "living water"



Screen 5

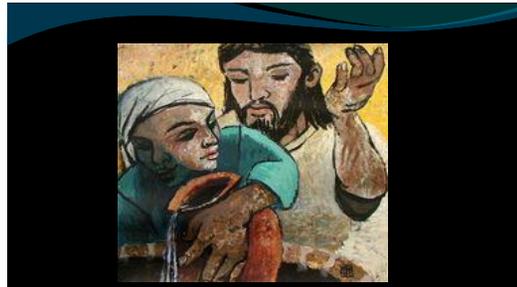
When a despised & outcast person inadvertently encountered Jesus  
and was engaged & accepted ... it was like they came upon a *cenote* of “living water”

When he taught in the synagogue, on a hillside, or in the city street  
and said things like, “*let the one without sin cast the 1<sup>st</sup> stone*” ... it was like they  
came upon a *cenote* of  
“living water”.

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“living water”.

Are you getting the picture of what it must have been like for this Samaritan woman



Screen 6

to have encountered Jesus ... these were two people (Jesus & her) for whom 1000's of years  
of prejudice and distain had decided that they shouldn't be anywhere near each other.

Yet here they were ... Jesus out of his element in Samaria  
and  
the woman an outcast getting her water  
when she thought no one else would be at the well to sneer at her.

You need to know a little bit about  
Samaritans and Jews to get the impact of this chance encounter of a young single Jewish  
man meeting alone with a female divorcee branded for her conjugal improprieties.

I describe it that way because it is a male/female minefield that Jesus is tramping through here ... not only were there rules about the intermixing of men and women, this particular woman has been marked as defiled.

So, I won't belabor that point anymore ... let's turn our attention to the "bad blood" between



Screen 7

Samaritans and Jews, it was like the Protestants & Catholics of Northern Ireland in the 1960's and 70's.

PAGE 4

The Samaritans trace their ancestry to remnants of the Judean population who remained in Samaria following conquest and exile of the Jews by the Babylonian Army.

When these Judean exiles returned from Babylon to Judah in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B . C ... a split developed between the returning exiles and those who were already there, in the homeland, it wasn't a warm homecoming for them.

Those returning were called Samaritans ... not Judeans anymore.

They were considered to be "impure" ... because of inner marriage over the generations while in exile.

They adopted some foreign religious practices which had the net effect of the Samaritans' refusing to accept new religious texts & interpretations of the Jews.

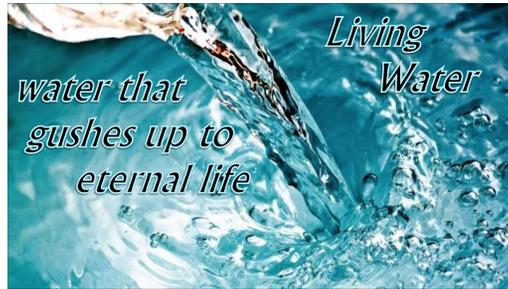
This carried over into New Testament times ...and by the time Jesus traveled the roads from Jerusalem to Galilee, the most despised people in the Jewish mindset were the Samaritans.

The Jews saw them as a mongrel race (half breeds, if you will) who adhered to a corrupted Judaism ... they were impure and to be avoided at all costs.

So aside from the male/female thing going on at the well (which was bad enough) ... there

was this other big enormous thing of racial prejudice & hatred providing an even bigger backdrop for this conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman.

And so, what ensues is this long conversation between the two of them at this well where Jesus describes himself to the woman as the one who gives “*living water*”,



water that “*gushes up to eternal life*” he says.

Screen 8

This is her cenote moment ... unaware that in Jesus' presence she is being offered more than H<sub>2</sub>O, water to drink ... she is being offered “*living water*” from which God wants her to drink ... water that forgives,  
water that accepts,  
water that heals  
water that changes the heart  
water that gives her a foundation amid the cruelty & violence of the world in which she lives to be spiritually strong & to make a difference in such a world.

PAGE 5

And the woman embraces the honesty, beauty, and wisdom of this cenote moment ... the honesty of her brokenness,  
the beauty of God's acceptance & forgiveness,  
the wisdom of sincere worship where there is spirit & truth.



Screen 9

In the spiritual strength of that *cenote* moment she leaves behind her water jar,

as if to leave behind something of her old life to begin something new ... and she goes to the city and makes a proclamation using a question: ***“Come and see the man who told me everything I’ve ever done! He cannot be the Messiah can he?”***

Her spiritual strength coming from this *cenote* moment makes a difference in her city where she was treated with cruelty, a city also filled with hatred & prejudice for Jews, we read: ***“Many Samaritans from that city believed in Jesus because of the woman’s testimony.”***

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Every time I read this passage



Screen 10

about Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well ... I am reminded of Father Bob

who spent a couple of evenings a week down at the local tavern.

It was a small resort town in northern Wisconsin, and Father Bob went to the local “well” as it were to talk with the patrons ... not to tell people that they shouldn’t be there or that they were drinking too much, but to have conversation with them.

His hope was to get to know people ... most knew who he was ... and in the course of many

conversations often times the topic turned to things spiritual because he was a priest,  
Father Bob was the resident expert on God.

***“People thirst for the spiritual”*** he would say, ***church goers and non-churchgoers alike are interested in God ... we, all of us, are a spiritual people.***”

PAGE 6

Father Bob didn't believe that everyone  
in the tavern was an alcoholic ... but he did believe that everyone in the tavern was  
thirsty for God in their lives.

Looking back on it now, I think Father Bob was trying to lead people to a  
*cenote* moment, to stumble across God in a bar ... he didn't describe it in those terms, but  
that's what it seemed he was doing; seeking to bring people to a place where, perhaps,  
they might glimpse the “living water” of God.

For some people it was the only time in their lives that they ever talked with  
anyone about God ... that in and of itself, was a *cenote* moment and I believe  
it made some difference in their lives ... of course, we'll never know to what extent.

For others in the town though (**like it could have happened for Jesus**) ...it didn't bode so well,  
for the priest at the tavern ... stories circulated about Father Bob that really weren't true  
and he eventually was transferred to another parish, in another diocese, in another state.

### Screen 11



A *cenote* moment ... like the actual *cenotes* of the  
Yucatan where there are many more than are documented and that people know of ... so it is  
with those spiritual *cenotes* ... they are more prevalent than you might think.

The “living water” of God is coursing through our spirits,  
through our experiences,  
through our interactions with each other ... even now as  
we assemble in this moment of worship ... it can be a  
*cenote* moment for you.

The “living water” of God courses through our lives and through all history and time ... it catches us unaware & unsuspecting when it breaks through the ground of our defenses & dismissive nature.

A *cenote* moment is when that living water of God gushes up within us making us different than we were before ... to change us and maybe in changing some small part of us, some small piece of the world can change for the better too.

A *cenote* moment ... it can happen to you, to me  
at any time, in any encounter.

AMEN

### **AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

We believe in God, the source of all life, wholeness, and love.

We believe that God is revealed in Jesus Christ.

We believe that in his life, Jesus reveals God in grace, mercy, forgiveness, and justice.

We believe that in his death, Jesus reveals God’s determined presence in the world even in the face of hatred, violence, and pain.

We believe that in his resurrection, Jesus reveals God calling us to abundant life both now and forever; to move beyond fear and to trust in God’s eternal presence.

We believe that God lives among us, within us, and through us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that God moves us to be together in communities of faith, hope, and love.

We believe these things not out of certainty but out of faith and we trust in the constant presence of God revealed in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Amen

### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Pray for your own “cenote” moment

Pray for the world ... for peace and healing, for the hungry  
Pray for the people of Bethany, our Grand Canyon Synod, The ELCA  
Pray for all of us in this difficult time of the Corona Virus and those ill with the virus  
Offer your own prayer concerns

**OFFERING** – Please mail your weekly offering to the church (thank you)

**PRAYER OF BLESSING**

*God of all bounty and love; we give, as a thank offering, gifts we have first received from your hand. We now return a portion of our blessings for the work of our church and the ministries we do in your name. Bless these offerings into actions that proclaim your love, mercy and compassion. AMEN.*

**THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**SENDING**

**BENEDICTION**

*The LORD bless you and keep you;  
the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;  
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. AMEN*

**DISMISSAL**

*Be energized with the living water of God for service and loving deeds.  
THANKS BE TO GOD.*