



## The Third Sunday of Lent 8<sup>th</sup> March 2026

Duccio de Buoninsegna – Christ  
and the Samaritan Woman, 1310-  
1311

In the name of the + Father,  
and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen

### HYMN

Take up thy cross, the Saviour said,  
if thou wouldst my disciple be;  
deny thyself, the world forsake,  
and humbly follow after me.

Take up thy cross, nor heed the shame,  
nor let thy foolish pride rebel;  
thy Lord for thee the cross endured,  
to save thy soul from death and hell.

Take up thy cross, let not its weight  
fill thy weak spirit with alarm;  
his strength shall bear thy spirit up,  
and brace thy heart and nerve thine arm.

Take up thy cross and follow Christ,  
nor think til death to lay it down;  
for only those who bear the cross  
may hope to wear the glorious crown.

### Introduction to confession

Let us prepare ourselves to receive God's Word.

The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart God will not despise.  
Let us come to the Lord, who is full of compassion,  
and acknowledge our transgressions in penitence and faith.

We confess to you our selfishness and lack of love:  
fill us with your Spirit.  
Lord, have mercy.  
We confess to you our fear and failure in sharing our faith:

fill us with your Spirit.  
Christ, have mercy.  
We confess to you our stubbornness and lack of trust:  
fill us with your Spirit.  
Lord, have mercy.

Absolution

The Lord enrich you with his grace,  
and nourish you with his blessing;  
the Lord defend you in trouble and  
keep you from all evil  
the Lord accept your prayers  
and absolve you from your offences, +  
for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Amen.

Let us pray

The Lent Collect

Almighty and everlasting God,  
you hate nothing that you have made  
and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent:  
create and make in us new and contrite hearts  
that we, worthily lamenting our sins  
and acknowledging our wretchedness,  
may receive from you, the God of all mercy,  
perfect remission and forgiveness;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen

The Collect for this Sunday

Almighty God,  
whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain,  
and entered not into glory before he was crucified:  
mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross,  
may find it none other than the way of life and peace;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen

A Reading from The Old Testament  
Exodus 17.1-7

17 The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. 2 So they quarrelled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink."

Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the Lord to the test?"

3 But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?"

4 Then Moses cried out to the Lord, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me."

5 The Lord answered Moses, "Go out in front of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarrelled and because they tested the Lord saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

This is the word of the Lord  
Thanks be to God

## Psalm 95

1 Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord;  
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.

2 Let us come before him with thanksgiving  
and extol him with music and song.

3 For the Lord is the great God,  
the great King above all gods.

4 In his hand are the depths of the earth,  
and the mountain peaks belong to him.

5 The sea is his, for he made it,  
and his hands formed the dry land.

6 Come, let us bow down in worship,  
let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;

7 for he is our God  
and we are the people of his pasture,  
the flock under his care.



Today, if only you would hear his voice,  
8 "Do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah,  
as you did that day at Massah in the wilderness,  
9 where your ancestors tested me;  
they tried me, though they had seen what I did.  
10 For forty years I was angry with that generation;  
I said, 'They are a people whose hearts go astray,  
and they have not known my ways.'  
11 So I declared on oath in my anger,  
'They shall never enter my rest.'"

## A reading from the New Testament Romans 5. 1-11

5 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 10 For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! 11 Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

This is the word of the Lord  
Thanks be to God

#### HYMN

How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds  
in a believer's ear!  
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,  
and drives away his fear.

Jesus! my Shepherd, Brother, Friend,  
my Prophet, Priest and King,  
my Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,  
accept the praise I bring.

It makes the wounded spirit whole,  
and calms the troubled breast;  
'tis manna to the hungry soul,  
and to the weary, rest.

Weak is the effort of my heart,  
and cold my warmest thought;  
but when I see thee as thou art,  
I'll praise thee as I ought

Dear Name, the rock on which I build,  
my shield and hiding-place,  
my never-failing treasury, filled  
with boundless stores of grace!

Till then I would thy love proclaim  
with every fleeting breath;  
and may the music of thy Name  
refresh my soul in death!

The Gospel  
John 4 5-42

Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.  
The Lord is a great God, O that today you would listen to his voice.  
Harden not your hearts.  
Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John  
Glory be to thee O Lord

4 Now Jesus had to go through Samaria. 5 So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" 8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

9 The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

11 "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

13 Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

15 The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

16 He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

17 "I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. 18 The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

19 "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. 20 Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

21 "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

25 The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

26 Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

27 Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

28 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 29 "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" 30 They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

31 Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something."

32 But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."

33 Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"

34 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. 35 Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. 36 Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. 37 Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. 38 I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labour."

39 Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. 41 And because of his words many more became believers.

42 They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world."

This is the Gospel of the Lord  
Praise to thee, O Christ

The Jews of that day considered Samaritans racially impure and ritually unclean, they were despised and avoided. You passed through Samaria only by necessity to avoid a much longer route.

So already Jesus is outside what is considered acceptable, but it gets worse, for a Rabbi, as Jesus was considered to be, to speak to a woman, any woman, in public was unthinkable. So here he is in the wrong place, with the wrong people and the wrong type of person. Disregarding any of this he initiates a conversation, even asking to share a drinking vessel which would be considered unclean. What is more, he discusses theology, with a woman, equally extraordinary. And note that whilst the returning disciples were aghast, none dared question him. Perhaps by now they were getting used to Jesus' disregard for man-made rules and regulations.

Of course, the most significant point of this account is what happened to the woman. There is no need to suppose she was a 'loose woman' there are several reasons why she may have had 'five husbands' being widowed, passed on to be wife to brother of the deceased husband, divorced, abandoned... She is living with someone to whom she is not married but in that society, to be alone was worse.

The term 'epiphany moment' has found its way into popular speech and thinking. It has the idea of a sudden flash of insight and profound understanding, sometimes with life changing consequences. It feels as if a hidden truth has suddenly been revealed to us, or we have been given new eyes with which to see it.

In the conversation between Jesus and the woman we can almost watch this happening. At first she evades Jesus' words, skirting around them rather than answering straight. She is bold and outspoken, used to giving as good as she got, defensive even, perhaps because of an unconventional life style which has taught her to have a quick tongue. Whatever, she appears to be outside of the norm, suggested by her getting water at midday when the usual time women went for water was in the cool morning. So she banters words with him at the start, just another man bothering her. But then Jesus goes straight to the heart, her heart. "Go and fetch your husband." And perhaps for a moment she is lost for words.

Whatever the circumstances of her life, and it is always contested, these words affect her profoundly. She is stunned that this man seems to know her and importantly she seems to suddenly see herself in a new way. And now the words she speaks are not quick and sharp. She speaks the truth, and hears the truth spoken back.

Now it is she who asks the questions. It is as if Jesus has exposed her longing to find meaning, to connect with God but she does not know how. "Where should I worship, where can I find God, I know that when the Messiah comes he will tell us everything". And Jesus replies "I am he I who am talking to you".

Their conversation is interrupted by the return of the bemused disciples and she returns to the village. So caught up by what has just happened to her, she forgets that she is on the fringes of the society that usually shuns her. You can imagine her running into the village, the words spilling from her mouth; "Come and see this man, he told me everything I have ever done!"

Well, of course, Jesus had not, it just felt that way to her. The revelation, the showing forth, the light that she had just encountered made it feel that way, it changed her and the way she viewed her world. She had become an 'epiphany'; a revelation to the people because they came and saw for themselves.

If we believe that we live in a world created by God why should we think it so strange that God should reveal himself to us? Indeed, the revelation of God is all around us, not just in the good and beautiful but in all things, for 'even the darkness is not dark to God' (Psalm 139).

The woman was just coming for water, a daily task. It is often in the ordinary, the mundane, in the silence of our thoughts that God comes to us, all of us. I think we often fail to recognise such moments even if we would not give them that name. Or we can quickly dismiss them rather than *holding* them and allowing them to change us. They may show us things about ourselves, which is often hard, but they also show us the people we could be and long to be.

## Intercessions

With confidence and trust let us pray to the Father.

For the one holy catholic and apostolic Church worldwide,  
let us pray to the Father.

Lord of compassion,  
in your mercy hear us.

For the mission of the Church,  
that in faithful witness it may preach the gospel  
to the ends of the earth,  
let us pray to the Father.

Lord of compassion,  
in your mercy hear us.

For peace in the world ...  
for places of war and violence  
for world leaders with power over the lives of others  
that a spirit of respect and reconciliation may grow  
among nations and peoples,  
let us pray to the Father.

Lord of compassion,  
in your mercy hear us.

For the poor, the sick, and all who suffer war and violence.  
For refugees, prisoners, remembering Lewes Prison and the chaplaincy team,  
For those persecuted for their faith and in danger  
that they may be relieved and protected,  
We pray for those in need known to us  
and those who have asked the prayers of the Church ...  
let us pray to the Father.

Lord of compassion,  
in your mercy hear us.

For those whom we have injured or offended...  
we ask for grace to amend our lives,  
to ask forgiveness and restore relationships,  
so to further the reign of God in our lives,  
let us pray to the Father.

Lord of compassion,  
in your mercy hear us.

In communion with all those who have walked in the way of holiness  
we pray for those who died this night,  
those who have died recently and those who mourn.  
For those whose anniversary of death is at this time...  
for all whom we remember always,  
let us pray to the Father,  
Lord of compassion,  
in your mercy hear us.

Eternal God,  
give us insight  
to discern your will for us,  
to give up what harms us,  
and to seek the perfection we are promised  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness,  
to deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow him;  
and the blessing of God almighty, +  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among us and remain with us always.  
Amen.

#### HYMN

Praise to the Holiest in the height,  
and in the depth be praise;  
in all his words most wonderful,  
most sure in all his ways!

O loving wisdom of our God!  
When all was sin and shame,  
a second Adam to the fight  
and to the rescue came.

O wisest love! that flesh and blood,  
which did in Adam fail,  
should strive afresh against the foe,  
should strive, and should prevail;

And that the higher gift of grace  
should flesh and blood refine:  
God's presence and his very self,  
and essence all-divine.

O generous love! that he who smote  
in man for man the foe,  
the double agony in Man  
for man should undergo.

And in the garden secretly,  
and on the cross on high,  
should teach his brethren, and inspire  
to suffer and to die.

Praise to the Holiest in the height,  
and in the depth be praise;  
in all his words most wonderful,  
most sure in all his ways!