**Maddie’s Sermon Follows the Reading**

**John 4:5-42**

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.”

Third Sunday in Lent

Year A RCL

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

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

          We are living in such strange and uncertain times. You have all been in my heart and on my mind. How I wish that we could all gather together in our sanctuary as we sing and worship Our Lord Jesus Christ as one community. Sadly, due to the circumstances that are bestowed upon us, this has become our temporary reality. So I am writing to you from my bedroom after I have put my kids to sleep. We just finished watching the new Star Wars movie, a never ending battle of good and evil. My living room was filled with excitement as we watched our favorite characters battle against one another, trying to restore balance to the galaxy. I won’t give away any spoilers to those who still haven’t seen the movie, but I will say that my family needed the break. We needed the time together to relax and unplug from the world if only for a couple hours. We needed to laugh, cheer, and cry. We needed to tense up and hold each other and then breath a sigh of relief, and it felt good. It felt restorative.

          You see, we are stressed; our whole world is. We are experiencing a type of uncertainty that many of us never have before. Thanks to modern medicine we haven’t had to worry about a pandemic of this magnitude in quite some time, and it’s scary. Most of us have been out and about in the hustle and bustle of finding the things that we need, to be able to hunker down in our homes for the next few weeks. We’ve made trips to the stores possibly shopping for those that can’t or shouldn’t. We’ve made phone calls checking in on those that we now can’t visit. We’ve seen the worry on the faces of the very people that we are trying to distance ourselves from. Our “community” is loosening, and we can feel it. What I believe we are feeling is uncertainty. It’s a feeling, a knowing, that something isn’t right. I can feel it in the pit of my stomach brewing up to my lungs. I will not panic. I will not give in to fear, but, my friends, I am uncertain.

          My uncertainty doesn’t come from necessarily worrying about getting sick, that may or may not happen and there isn’t much that I can do about it. What my uncertainty does come from is the fragility of our communities. Knowing that there are children out there that get most of their meals at school. Are they now without food? What about child care? Are their parents able to work? Should they go to work? What about the elderly? Are they lonely? Can they get the things that they need? Those with already compromised immune systems? Who’s out buying toilet paper for them? What about our health care workers? What happens if they get sick? They have families at home, too. These things are all very real, and they make me worry.

          I wonder if this is how the Isriaelites felt as they were hunkered down in Rephidim with no water? They asked Moses, “why did you bring us all this way, just to have us die out here with no water? What gives Moses? What’s the point?” So then poor Moses goes to God, and says, “Look God, these people are going to stone me to death, I can’t go back to them with nothing, ya wanna send a little help my way?” I can’t help but find the humor in this as I see our nation fighting over toilet paper. Hey God, can ya spare a square?! Yes, this is really what we have come to. It’s both funny and worrisome, but isn’t that exactly what life is?

          I’m just going to throw the first part of the second reading right out there, “Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through who we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we 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.” (Rom. 5:1-5)

Breathe in and breathe out. Yes this is worrisome. Yes this is scary. Yes we are all uncertain. But please don’t forget that we have each other. We are one body through the love and grace of God. Even as we are separated and unable to worship together we are still connected. We are connected by something so much greater than Covid-19. We are connected by our risen Lord Jesus Christ through the holy spirit that lives and breathes within each one of us. This is the same Jesus offering the living water to the woman at the well. He is here, and he hears our cries. He is ready to fill our buckets with the hope of ever lasting life. We will get through this. Our communities will be restored, and we will look back at this pandemic and remember how we helped one another. So please, please have faith, be kind and love one another.

Peace and Love,

Maddie