

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT (YEAR A) Sunday 8 March 2026

## EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

# RUNNING WATER

### EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

#### *Introducing the Gospel*

*Living water brings eternal life (John 4: 5-42)*

The image of water has already played an important part in John's Gospel: in chapter one, John baptized with water; in chapter two, Jesus turned water into wine. Now the image of water is transformed in two ways. First, the image is now concerned with 'living water' in Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well. The flowing, moving, dynamic nature of living water is contrasted with the still, motionless water at the bottom of the well. Second, this living water, like Jesus himself, holds the key to eternal life. Here is one of the key images of Messiahship held out during Lent.

The image to stimulate reflection on John's account of Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well is *running water*.

#### *Core extract from the Gospel (John 4: 10-11, 13-14; for reflection throughout the week)*

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?'  
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.'

#### *Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)*

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you are the living water  
welling up into eternal life.  
Draws us to that living water,  
that we may drink from the well of life;  
for your name's sake.  
Amen.

**READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL**

**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 labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour.'

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 Saviour of the world.'

## **ENGAGING WITH THE THEME**

### ***Dwelling with the text (John 4: 5-42)***

Begin to explore John's account of Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

### ***Thinking and talking***

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- What was the significance of Jesus meeting with a woman at the well?
- What was the significance of the woman being a Samaritan?
- What is meant by 'living water'?
- Why were the disciples surprised that Jesus was speaking with a Samaritan woman?
- What does this narrative say for us today?

### ***Using your Bible***

Explore the image of water in John's Gospel.

- John 1: 24-27
- John 2: 7-9
- John 3: 5-6
- John 5: 2-7
- John 7: 37-38

Explore the image of water in Isaiah.

- Isaiah 12: 3-4
- Isaiah 44: 3
- Isaiah 49: 10
- Isaiah 58: 11

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### *Exploring online*

Widen your exploration of John's account of Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Water in John's Gospel
- Water in the Bible
- Pictures of cascading water

### *Drawing on experience*

The image to stimulate reflection on John's account of Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well is *running water*. Draw on your experience of running water. For example:

- Have you watched fast flowing water in a river?
- Have you watched water cascading from a waterfall?
- Have you watched water features in a garden centre?

What have you learned about running water?

### *Creating and making*

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by John's account of Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well or by the image of running water.

- Create a feature of running water.
- Make a collage of images of running water.
- Create a mural of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well or on the image of running water.

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**Liverpool  
Cathedral**

## **EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL**

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales.



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