

The Third Sunday in Lent – 2026

Exodus 17:1-7

Romans 5:1-8

John 4:5-30, 39-42

I wouldn't want to play chess against Jesus. He would destroy me. He's always two moves ahead (infinite moves ahead). Jesus would make an excellent cornerback – He would never fall for a head fake. He would jump the receiver's route and the announcer would say: "And the Lord has Himself another pick six." In chess, if you know what your opponent is up to it's a great advantage. Anticipating your opponent's next move and then preemptively moving a critical piece to sabotage their plan – Jesus would make an awesome chess player. Muhammad Ali used to wave around his right hand as a distraction, just to jab you in the face with his left. Jesus would've clobbered Ali.

In military aircraft it is a very good strategy not to get shot down. The enemy wants to shoot you down. Preventing this from happening is a worthwhile pursuit. Chaff, they call it, countermeasures, flares, and chaff. The aircraft that doesn't want to get shot down releases decoys to distract radar guided missiles, decoys that distract infrared heat seeking missiles. It's great self-defense. Hey missile, look over here, don't home in on the aircraft, explode yourself on this distraction. I believe that these countermeasures are, for the most part, successful. They don't work on Jesus.

The Son of God came to this earth to pour out living water (Isaiah 41:18-20; John 19:34). The Lord Christ took upon Himself our human flesh so that He might pour out an abundant supply of water alive with His blood, alive with His Spirit. Gobs of this water streaming from His side in death (Ephesians 5:25-27). Water from the rock, pierced on the tree, cascading into the desert of our sinful existence (Exodus 17:1-7). That's why He came. To bear our sin and be our Savior; to pour out His lifeblood and make us alive in Baptism (Romans 6:1-11). No water, no life. No Christ, no redemption. No cross, no heaven. Jesus came to bring life, came to purchase our redemption, came to open heaven. Living water; from Jesus' wounded side flowed streams of salvation; life creating and life sustaining water – from His riven side directly into our baptismal font. A refreshing stream of life in our desert of death. That's why He came; that's what animates His actions and His words. Saving the dead; giving us living water.

So, there He is, by a well, weary; tired. And a lady comes up. "Give me a drink" (John 4:7). Boy, can the Lord be direct! The woman makes a fuss about societal barriers and societal etiquette and societal protocol (John 4:9). Jesus transcends all that. He knocks down the barriers and presses the conversation. In the everyday routine of this woman, the Lord of heaven and earth presses a conversation about water. And she seems half a step behind. After she demurred about giving Him a drink, the Lord ramps up the content of this little chat. "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" (John 4:10). That's what Jesus truly wants, to give *her* living water. But He crams Himself down no one's throat.

She has a thirst she tries desperately not to think about. More than her body, more than the mere demand of her physical need, this woman requires what Christ alone offers. Sin and death have

brought their cruel drought to man. We have no righteousness of our own. The Law accuses us justly. Silently, in the depth of her being, she knows this. This is why Jesus presses her – to fully awaken her awareness, to get her eyes open to her need. Still, she dances her verbal dance; a half-step behind, she seems oblivious. “Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do You get that living water?” (John 4:11).

Think of it... the well is deep; how, Sir, will you draw this living water? What a brilliant question! God’s justice made the well of living water deep indeed. What did Jesus have to do in order to draw living water for you? Would the Son of God have to bear your sin? Greed, lust, and a murderous hatred – those attributes which flow from your fallen nature, the acts of sin which you have committed and the wrath of God which is directed against those acts... would Jesus bear it in order to draw living water? Oh, yes. With what does the Lord draw living water from the well. Fidelity, radical fidelity, to the Father. Was Jesus faithful to His Father in every circumstance – mind, body and soul? Did He stand in your place, a true son, doing precisely what His Father called Him to do? Was He perfect? Was He loving? Sin made the well deep and with what does Jesus draw living water? This perfect Man bore the punishment which the whole world deserves. He willingly paid that price. He draws living water with His sacrificial death. What did He use to draw living water? He used His dying love. He used His divine flesh.

The water Jesus offers her is eternal, welling up in her, in you as a heavenly spring of perpetual refreshment. The beautiful woman is interested, but still a step behind. “Sir, give me this water, so that I will no longer be thirsty or have to come here to draw water” (John 4:15). Jesus the chess player changes the topic. “Go, call your husband, and come here” (John 4:16). The woman at the well doesn’t want to get shot down, so she deploys the counter-measures – flares and chaff. “I have no husband” (John 4:17). Jesus doesn’t fall for the head fake. It is a foolhardy strategy, trying to divert God away from your sin. I have no husband. Counter-measures don’t work with Christ; don’t try it. Futile, vain, faithless – you can’t evade the Master and trying doesn’t help anyone. You sin. This will continue – though you should do everything in your power to stop this. You sin. It is no surprise to anyone. The law stings and your first response is to evade. Is that the kind of Christian you want to be? God calls you to repent. Brokenness, openness, honesty – that is the believer’s response to sin (Psalm 51:17). Repent! Forsake countermeasures, renounce them, be honest with Christ, with yourself, with others. Forgiveness, living water, the water Christ gives is wholly congruent with repentance. Living water is incongruent with countermeasures.

“You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true” (John 4:17-18). Exposed, all pretense is abandoned and a quest for genuine knowledge begins. Worship and the coming Messiah, the New Covenant, the fulfillment of prophetic promises – the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth. Her sin is real and for it she needs forgiveness. The Messianic King will bring that forgiveness and those who gather around Him worship the Father in Spirit and truth. The Living Lord gives us His living Word, His living body and His living blood and we worship the Father in Spirit and truth. Here, and wherever Christ and Him crucified is preached, there the worshipers are led by the Holy Spirit into the truth (John 16:13). In this Divine Service, you have come to the well of Christ and

He extends to you the wonder of His grace. You were baptized into His death and resurrection, and His life is in you, His Spirit is in you, His love is in you.

The Holy Trinity is active and vibrant here. He establishes our worship and brings life to sinners. We worship the Father in Spirit and Truth. The Spirit directs us to Christ and Christ brings us to the Father. The spring of God's grace is welling up here at Christ the King, buoying believers to heaven. "As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God" (Psalm 42:1-2).