

Call to Worship

God's Truth opens our eyes on the world.

God's Spirit shatters our prejudice.

God's Truth nourishes our hearts.

God's Spirit encourages us in the face of fear.

God's Truth frees us from past mistakes and misunderstanding.

God's Spirit moves us to find new purpose in life.

So let us worship God in Spirit and in Truth.

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Hymn

As the deer

1. As the deer pants for the water,
so my soul longs after you;
you alone are my heart's desire,
and I long to worship you.

Refrain

*You alone are my strength, my shield;
to you alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart's desire,
And I long to worship you.*

2. You're my friend and you are my brother
Even though you are the King
I love you more than any other
So much more than anything

Refrain

3. You are more precious than gold or silver,
Only you can satisfy.
You alone are the real joy giver
And the apple of my eye

Refrain

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Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Creator, Christ and Spirit

you provide what we need to live, from the bounty of creation.

God of mercy,

you know us through and through and you love us.

God of hope,
you have an everlasting purpose for us.

God of wisdom,
you open our minds and teach and guide us.

So we come to worship you, Source of Wisdom, Son of Mercy, Spirit of Hope,
offering you our prayers and our praise, trusting you to offer us the gifts we need
to thrive and to serve you in the world you love.

God, our Redeemer,

We are not proud of all you hear in our thoughts and prayers.

We complain when we want things to change but don't know what to do.

We justify ourselves when you call us to change but we don't want to.

We blame others when things change and upset our expectations.

Forgive us, God, when we are not listening for you.

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Assurance of Forgiveness (*Exodus 17, Romans 5, John 4*)

Our hope and assurance rest in God's unfailing love and forgiveness.
Open your hearts and minds and souls that the healing waters
of God's never-ending love and forgiveness may flow into and over you.
Know that in this love and forgiveness you have encountered the living God.

[Ministry Matters™ | Worship Elements: March 12, 2023](#)

Scripture Readings

❖ Exodus 17:1-7

¹⁻² Directed by GOD, the whole company of Israel moved on by stages from the Wilderness of Sin. They set camp at Rephidim. And there wasn't a drop of water for the people to drink. The people took Moses to task: "Give us water to drink." But Moses said, "Why pester me? Why are you testing GOD?"

³ But the people were thirsty for water there. They complained to Moses, "Why did you take us from Egypt and drag us out here with our children and animals to die of thirst?"

⁴ Moses cried out in prayer to GOD, "What can I do with these people? Any minute now they'll kill me!"

⁵⁻⁶ GOD said to Moses, "Go on out ahead of the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel. Take the staff you used to strike the Nile. And go. I'm going to be present before you there on the rock at Horeb. You are to strike the rock. Water will gush out of it and the people will drink."

⁶⁻⁷ Moses did what he said, with the elders of Israel right there watching. He named the place Massah (Testing-Place) and Meribah (Quarreling) because of the quarreling of the Israelites and because of their testing of GOD when they said, "Is GOD here with us, or not?"

❖ John 4:5-42

⁴⁻⁶ To get there, he had to pass through Samaria. He came into Sychar, a Samaritan village that bordered the field Jacob had given his son Joseph. Jacob's well was still there. Jesus, worn out by the trip, sat down at the well. It was noon.

⁷⁻⁸ A woman, a Samaritan, came to draw water. Jesus said, "Would you give me a drink of water?" (His disciples had gone to the village to buy food for lunch.)

⁹ The Samaritan woman, taken aback, asked, "How come you, a Jew, are asking me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" (Jews in those days wouldn't be caught dead talking to Samaritans.)

¹⁰ Jesus answered, "If you knew the generosity of God and who I am, you would be asking *me* for a drink, and I would give you fresh, living water."

¹¹⁻¹² The woman said, "Sir, you don't even have a bucket to draw with, and this well is deep. So how are you going to get this 'living water'? Are you a better man than our ancestor Jacob, who dug this well and drank from it, he and his sons and livestock, and passed it down to us?"

¹³⁻¹⁴ Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again and again. Anyone who drinks the water I give will never thirst—not ever. The water I give will be an artesian spring within, gushing fountains of endless life."¹⁵ The woman said, "Sir, give me this water so I won't ever get thirsty, won't ever have to come back to this well again!"

¹⁶ He said, "Go call your husband and then come back."

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ "I have no husband," she said.

"That's nicely put: 'I have no husband.' You've had five husbands, and the man you're living with now isn't even your husband. You spoke the truth there, sure enough."

¹⁹⁻²⁰ "Oh, so you're a prophet! Well, tell me this: Our ancestors worshiped God at this mountain, but you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place for worship, right?"

²¹⁻²³ "Believe me, woman, the time is coming when you Samaritans will worship the Father neither here at this mountain nor there in Jerusalem. You worship guessing in the dark; we Jews worship in the clear light of day. God's way of salvation is made available through the Jews. But the time is coming—it has, in fact, come—when what you're called will not matter and where you go to worship will not matter.

²³⁻²⁴ "It's who you are and the way you live that count before God. Your worship must engage your spirit in the pursuit of truth. That's the kind of people the Father is out looking for: those who are simply and honestly *themselves* before him in their worship. God is sheer being itself—Spirit. Those who worship him must do it out of their very being, their spirits, their true selves, in adoration."

²⁵ The woman said, "I don't know about that. I do know that the Messiah is coming. When he arrives, we'll get the whole story."

²⁶ "I am he," said Jesus. "You don't have to wait any longer or look any further."

²⁷ Just then his disciples came back. They were shocked. They couldn't believe he was talking with that kind of a woman. No one said what they were all thinking, but their faces showed it.

28-30 The woman took the hint and left. In her confusion she left her water pot. Back in the village she told the people, “Come see a man who knew all about the things I did, who knows me inside and out. Do you think this could be the Messiah?” And they went out to see for themselves.

It's Harvest Time

³¹ In the meantime, the disciples pressed him, “Rabbi, eat. Aren't you going to eat?”

³² He told them, “I have food to eat you know nothing about.”

³³ The disciples were puzzled. “Who could have brought him food?”

³⁴⁻³⁵ Jesus said, “The food that keeps me going is that I do the will of the One who sent me, finishing the work he started. As you look around right now, wouldn't you say that in about four months it will be time to harvest? Well, I'm telling you to open your eyes and take a good look at what's right in front of you. These Samaritan fields are ripe. It's harvest time!

³⁶⁻³⁸ “The Harvester isn't waiting. He's taking his pay, gathering in this grain that's ripe for eternal life. Now the Sower is arm in arm with the Harvester, triumphant. That's the truth of the saying, ‘This one sows, that one harvests.’ I sent you to harvest a field you never worked. Without lifting a finger, you have walked in on a field worked long and hard by others.”

³⁹⁻⁴² Many of the Samaritans from that village committed themselves to him because of the woman's witness: “He knew all about the things I did. He knows me inside and out!” They asked him to stay on, so Jesus stayed two days. A lot more people entrusted their lives to him when they heard what he had to say. They said to the woman, “We're no longer taking this on your say-so. We've heard it for ourselves and know it for sure. He's the Savior of the world!”

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The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Message Give me water

Water. It is a source of life. Without it we cannot survive. It is said that on average a person can only survive for three days without water. Of course, there are many variables that can affect that, but the fact remains, we need water for life.¹ So it comes as no surprise that water is used throughout the scriptures to demonstrate the physical need of water, such as the story of the people in the first testament who complained to Moses. Actually, almost revolted over the lack of water. And we hear also the story of the woman from Samaria who came to draw water at the well of Jacob only to find Jesus him spouting words that he can provide living water that quenches thirst.

Water cleanses, that we know. So, it is a symbol for that which cleanses us from sin. Sin being anything that separates us from a Holy God. Water also refreshes. It sustains the life of people, plants, and animals...the whole of creation. As such, there has been much controversy over corporations buying well water to bottle it and make money. Many,

¹ [How long can you live without water? Facts and effects \(medicalnewstoday.com\)](https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/322822) Accessed March 10, 2023.

including the Presbyterian Church in Canada see water as a right and not a privilege. Bottled water makes it seem that to have water is not our right, that somehow it is a commodity. There is a time and place for bottled water, but profiting on what is considered essential to human existence should be challenged. The fact that there are many First Nations in Canada without access to clean drinking water is a huge downfall in our caring for one another. None of us in towns and cities across Canada would ever put up with such a crisis for long. We would cry out for justice, for things to be put right, just as the Israelites did so long ago.

Water is essential, life-giving, life-sustaining, and valuable. Water or lack thereof changes everything.

Let's walk for a moment with the Israelites in the wilderness. Remember they have seen God do mighty and awesome things to set them free from slavery in Egypt, but when they lacked water, they forgot how God had been with them and provided for their every need. Not their wants, but their needs.

As we read, ³ "But the people were thirsty for water there. They complained to Moses, 'Why did you take us from Egypt and drag us out here with our children and animals to die of thirst?'" ⁴ Moses cried out in prayer to God, "What can I do with these people? Any minute now they'll kill me!"

This was a crisis moment. Complaining from the people to Moses and then Moses complaining to God. More than complaining, this was serious, dangerous, life-threatening. "Give us water" is their demand. They demand it from Moses, but even more so they demand it from God. The people had forgotten that God was capable and willing to provide...to be God with them.

As the story goes, God instructs Moses to strike his staff against a particular rock and water gushes out. The people are good again, for a while anyway. They will find new things to be frustrated about in the stories to come, but for now they are appeased.

It is of note that Moses named the place "Massah (Testing-Place) and Meribah (Quarreling) because of the quarreling of the Israelites and because of their testing of God when they said, 'Is God here with us, or not?'"

Water also comes into play in the story of the woman from Samaria and her encounter with Jesus at the well. Now, often the part of this story that gets attention is the fact that this woman has had so many husbands. People like to read into that part about the husbands. She and her behaviour are judged. The men who have put her in this position are not judged. Many a sermon has made her out to be a sinful woman.

But Jesus doesn't go there. We are never told why the woman has had so many husbands. What we do know is that in the culture of that time, women were the possessions of men, not seen as valuable in and of themselves. As well, there were restrictions about men speaking with women, particularly in public. We also know that

the woman had come to the well at noon time, which was the least likely time for others to be there. She was likely avoiding people who would judge her.

When Jesus asks her to give him water, a whole lot of boundaries were being crossed. Social boundaries, religious boundaries, ethnic and gender boundaries were all set aside so that Jesus could meet this woman where she was at, physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. All of this pointing back to the words of John 3:16...for God so loved the world.

You see most Jews would do whatever it took to avoid going through Samaria, and Jesus really didn't need to go there to get from the Judean countryside back to Galilee. He could have done what others did – take a different route. But Jesus didn't. He went to Samaria and encountered a woman at a well and in a conversation changed her whole life.

She came to the well with a water pot to fill and when Jesus offers her a well spring of water that would alleviate her thirst for a life time she said, "Give me that water". After their candid and deeply theological conversation, the woman, who has come for water with her water pot, completely forgets about the water and leave the pot behind. She went back to her village and told people, "Come see a man who knew all about the things I did, who knows me inside and out." She wondered aloud, "Do you think this could be the Messiah?" And that sent people back to the well to check it out for themselves."

She was curious, she was changed by the encounter. Remember she came to the well when she believed no one else would be there and ends up going back to her village and speaking with people, offering them food for thought, a hope for the Messiah. A Messiah that people whose understanding was that the Messiah would bring new life to people, even if they didn't truly understand how.

The disciples were shocked when then had come upon Jesus speaking with the woman. They didn't challenge him, but they judged him and likely the woman for the encounter. We are told that one could see it on their faces.

Jesus then goes from talking about water with the woman to a conversation with the disciples about food and harvest time. Jesus is attempting to get everyone to know that there is refreshing water and nourishing food to be had in one's relationship with God. Jesus is not saying that we don't physically need water and food. Of course we do. But it is because food and water are so important to human survival that Jesus uses those elements to speak to the life-giving relationship that God offers each and every one of us.

This passage is so rich in the ways it speaks about our relationship with God and others, that I can't touch on all of them, so I want to pose a few thoughts.

First, what boundaries are we being asked to cross that would bring God's love into the world and especially to those we think are least deserving of God's love? And then how comfortable are we with watching them share that life-giving message to others in the

community, even when they are new to their understanding what it means to be a person of faith?

Another question that could be asked is, what do we need to leave behind? Like the water pot that the woman left, what are we being asked to leave behind in order to bring the love of God into the world. It may be something of ourselves that we are asked to leave behind. It may be something about our worship or the way we do ministry. It may be our judgements, our expectations, our comforts.

And what about the water itself...this life-giving water that Jesus offers? Do we drink from the well that brings us life and life to others or do we continue to be thirsty, never satisfied, always longing for something that will sustain us? Are we willing to take the chance on the change that will happen in us when we drink from the life giving well of water.

Jesus said, "...Anyone who drinks the water I give will never thirst—not ever. The water I give will be an artesian spring within, gushing fountains of endless life." Think about that in your own life. "an artesian spring within, gushing fountains of endless life." That sounds like something to take hold of.

We get to offer that water to others. We have the privilege of sharing God's love with those we would least likely chose to spend time with, and also with those we love dearly. We get to experience that life-giving water for ourselves. Give me water...Lord give us the water of life...a sustaining relationship with God that flows in and through us and out into the world.

In Christ, with Christ and through Christ. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Revealing God,
We seek to offer you our prayers in spirit and in truth.
We thank you for the truth of your love
which welcomes us as we are, not as the world tells us we should be.
Thank you for the truth of your mercy
which embraces us even when you recognize our mistakes and failures.
Thank you for the truth of your purpose
which gives us meaning and direction for our lives.
And thank you for the truth of your vision
which gives us hope for our future even in challenging times.

Revealing God,
We seek from you truth for our times.
We are surrounded by claims of truth and much that misleads.
We pray for those who feel overwhelmed by so much information:
Grant us all the ability to discern fact from fabrication,
And to recognize self-interest disguised as sincerity.

Revealing God,
We seek from you truth in our history.
We know that most history has been written by the winners
so give us the willingness to hear the stories that have been silenced.
We pray for those who have stories that are difficult to tell.
Grant us both the courage to speak and to listen,
and the wisdom to recognize truth even when it makes us uncomfortable.

Revealing God,
We seek from you truth in our characters and shared humanity.
We hear voices that are fearful, critical and cynical,
so help us listen for voices of respect, generosity and filled with hope.
Show us the potential we have to work together,
to find common cause even among those with different perspectives,
and accomplish more than we can imagine right now,
because, together, we have been created in your image.
Awaken in us and among us the potential to serve you in serving one another
For this is the way you are revealed to us in Jesus Christ, both Friend and Saviour,
who taught us to pray together:

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Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Invitation to the offering

We are called to live in hope and to share this hope with the world.
Let us offer thanks to God for all God has given us
by sharing generously of ourselves and of our resources.
Through our gifts, may all experience the hope to be found in our life-giving God.

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1. Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand:
bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore;
feed me now and evermore.
2. Open now the crystal fountain,
whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fire and cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through:
strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
be thou still my strength and shield;
be thou still my strength and shield.
3. When I tread the verge of Jordan,
bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death, and hell's destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side:
songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to thee;
I will ever give to thee.

Words and Music: public domain

Benediction

We have encountered the living God
through the love of the living Christ.

We have been refreshed by living water.
Go now to live in the hope this encounter inspires.

Be water bearers to a dry and parched world,
knowing that the God of love and hope
goes before you and with you always. Amen.

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