Thirst. Spiritual thirst. Do you feel it? If you are reading this, you probably have it. Today’s lessons speak of it. A thirst to know more, to go deeper into one’s faith, and draw closer to God. Spiritual thirst is a Lenten theme for sure. And I believe it is a theme for us especially in these times of upheaval and angst with the Corona virus. This period in our lives is surely a different kind of Lent. As schools and offices close, as we hunker down for social distancing, as events are cancelled, today’s lessons call out to us. As we reset our routines, reorient our lives, there may be more time for our faith. a time to fuel our spiritual thirst, and answer God’s thirst for our attention. And important right now, this is a time to share our spiritual insights with one another. The Samaritan woman in our Gospel today is a great model for us. But before we get to scripture, here is a contemporary story of spiritual thirst and the sharing of newfound spiritual gift.

Several years ago when LYRA came to All Saints’ – I believe it was their first performance - I vividly remember sitting around the dinner table with singers, chatting about religious faith in Russia. One of the singers told us a story about her own faith journey in Russia. Both her parents had grown up under communism in the Soviet Union and were not at all churched so to speak. Her grandfather had introduced her to the Russian Orthodox church in some way. God’s Spirit had touched her profoundly. She described a moment when she was 16 years old. She went to her mother and told that she wanted to join the church. Her mother was quite concerned. So concerned that she took her daughter to the doctor because she thought there was something wrong with this teenager who wanted to go to church. Fast forward years later, the young woman gets older and becomes the choral director at a large Russian Orthodox church. She joined LYRA, singing beautiful Russian Orthodox music.

This singer’s thirst for God’s spiritual nourishment and her teaching role in the Russian Orthodox church is an example for us. It speaks of how we encounter God in most unexpected ways - an example of a young person who listened and was so touched by God’s Spirit, that she followed and proclaimed Christ in her vocation of music director at a church. Her story, takes us to the Samaritan woman’s spiritual thirst and proclamation in today’s Gospel. We find some unexpectedness in the Samaritan woman’s story too.

Jesus is tired in our Gospel today. And Jesus is thirsty. Fatigue and thirst are so very recognizable human feelings. He is sitting by the well. We are even told the time – noon. Maybe he is also hungry, because the disciples had gone off to the city to buy food. A Samaritan woman comes to the well to fill her water jar.

Then begins this momentous conversation between Jesus and the woman. Jesus starts it by asking for a drink of water. She is astounded by this - a Jewish man engaging her, a Samaritan, and a woman, alone at a well. Jews and Samaritans are enemies. Two peoples who disagree about fundamental matters of faith - how and where to worship, different bibles, and different temples. Moreover, the Samaritan at the well is a woman, and it is not customary for a Jewish man to strike up a conversation alone with a Samaritan woman, much less to ask her for a drink of water.

But Jesus does. He asks her for a drink and that opening encounter cascades into questions about Jesus’ identity. She is so amazed by Jesus that she hastens back to the city, in so much of a hurry that she forgets her water jar. She proclaims, “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” And the Gospel relates, “*Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony.”*

What is this marvelous identity that Jesus offers to the Samaritan woman? What fills her Spirit with such exuberance? Waters. The stuff of life. Something we cannot live without. Spiritual waters to feed spiritual thirst. Jesus says, *“those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty.”* Waters of God’s Hope. Waters of God’s Peace. Waters of God’s Holy Healing. The Samaritan woman said to Jesus, I want this water. “*Give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”*

Our Russian singer and the Samaritan woman show us is that quite simply, our spiritual thirst is sufficient for Jesus. We don’t need to know all the answers. Simply follow that spiritual thirst. God will take your further into it. Consider the way that the Samaritan woman proclaimed Jesus - “He can’t be the Messiah, can he?” This is part question. Her understanding may have been incomplete but she knows that something has happened in her heart, there at the well. Jesus beckons to all of us – come to me. Our open hearts are sufficient for Jesus. We don’t need to know all there is to know. What we can do is tell others our experience. God will take over.

An editorial in yesterday’s *Providence Journal* that begins: Americans seem to be joining in a spirit of cooperation to try to stem the spread of coronavirus. I find that to be true. And we as church play an important part in this. One way to help, in these times of angst and uncertainty - the perfect time to share with others your spiritual thirst and the insight, the comfort, the wisdom, the compassion that God gives you.

Before ending, I want to give a little attention to another kind of spiritual thirst that is found in the lesson from Exodus today. There is something important for us to ponder at this time because it happened in a time of great stress. The people of Israel were wandering in the desert. They were thirsty. They target Moses, their leader as the cause of their distress. Their Spirit is parched. They cry out to God: Where are you God? Have you forgotten us? Moses feels this leadership burden and is frightened by the hostility. Moses, fearfully, goes to God *“What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.”* And God’s response? Nurturing and life giving water. God is powerfully present. God provides, through Moses.

Moses gives this place a curious name. The Hebrew place name means "Is Yahweh among us or not?". It’s a common question. This place name, reminds us that when faced with fear or doubt, God responds with and through flowing, life-giving water.

When stress presents itself, not unlike some of the anxiety the corona virus is bringing, it is easy to sink into fear, and even blame. Let us remember God’s response to our spiritual thirst – life giving help. Remember the extraordinary conversation at the well between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. And the Samaritan woman’s life giving proclamation in her own city. The Samaritan woman said to Jesus, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty.” And then she immediately shared her faith with others. We have been gifted those waters in our baptism. In our seeking, may we allow those waters of Love, Presence, Healing, and Peace fill our hearts. May we speak that comfort and Holy Presence to others. Amen.

For Christians, Jesus’ death forms the singular focus on what God was doing through his life, death, resurrection, and the birth of the church. From the earliest days, the cross came to stand for everything distinctively Christian. It symbolizes both human sin and God’s all-giving love. It symbolizes both human sinfulness and human freedom from spiritual death, reconciling us to God, reuniting us with God and one another.

**Easter – Joel and John**

Easter Joel – Grace in the wilderness.

God, the risen Lord is among us. Presence we may not see.

Presence that we need to carry to see.

Listen and carry the voice of God who calls are names.