



Living Water

For the third Sunday of Lent, we look at the parallels between the Gospel and Exodus readings

The Lectionary, which sets the readings for the Church, throws up some fascinating juxtapositions. Bible passages often resonate deeply when read together, revealing depths we might not spot if read in isolation. This seems particularly true of this Sunday's Old Testament and Gospel readings: Exodus 17:1-7 and John 4:5-42. It is impossible to miss the significance of 'living water' in both passages.

Jesus's 40-days in the wilderness (a period we seek to emulate during Lent), echoes the Israelites' 40-year journey through the wilderness in Exodus. Reading these passages side-by-side, the intention of the Gospel authors seems clear: Jesus is the *new* Moses and this is the *new* Exodus.

Exodus	John 4
When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well. 2:15	Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from his journey, sat down by the well. 4:6
So they quarrelled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." 17:2	When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" 4:7
"I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." 17:6	Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." 4:13-14
God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" 3:14	Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you - I am he." 4:26

Reflections

- How do these allusions enrich our reading of these passages?
- What do we lose if we are unable to recognise the references to the Old Testament when reading the New Testament and vice versa?
- Jesus makes seven "I am" statements in the Gospel of John, claiming that he is the bread of life (6:35), the light of the world (8:12), the door (10:7), the good shepherd (10:11, 14), the resurrection and the life (11:25), the way the truth and the life (14:6) and the true vine (15:1), as well as the statement at 4:26 noted in the table above. How are we to understand these claims in the light of Exodus 3:14?
- What might the Exodus story mean for your Lenten journey this year?

Resources

Today's sermon about the Samaritan woman is indebted to Caryn A. Reeder's *The Samaritan Woman's Story: Reconsidering John 4 After #ChurchToo* (IVP Press, 2022). It provides a summary of the varied readings of John 4 through Church history, some sympathetic but mostly hostile to the Samaritan woman. Reeder's appearance on the *On Script* podcast is a useful starting point ('The Samaritan Woman's Story after #ChurchToo').

Those looking for a study of John's Gospel as a whole could do a lot worse than spend time with Sandra M. Schneiders *Written That You May Believe* (New York: Herder & Herder, 2003). This provided my first encounter with the idea that the 'five husbands' might be read symbolically.

Ruth Everhart's *The #MeToo Reckoning: Facing the Church's Complicity in Sexual Abuse and Misconduct* (IVP, Press, 2020) provides a powerful testimony about the prevalence of sexual abuse and misconduct within faith communities. Ruth's appearance on the *Her Story Speaks* podcast is a useful primer.

The New York Times bestseller *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation* (Liveright, 2022) by Kristin Kobes Du Mez is a sobering read about the distorting effect of nationalism and toxic masculinity. Kristin's appearance on the podcast *The Bible for Normal People* is recommended ('A Modern Church History of Toxic Masculinity').

A helpful re-reading of some of the Biblical passages often deployed to support patriarchal attitudes is provided by British Baptist minister Helen Paynter in her book *The Bible Doesn't Tell Me So: Why you don't have to submit to domestic abuse and coercive control* (BRF, 2020).

Christian charity *Restored* speaks up about violence against women and equips churches across the United Kingdom and beyond to respond to domestic abuse. They have produced some invaluable reports and study guides which are available on their website.

Links to these resources are imbedded into the electronic copy. Just click on the underlined words.