

## SCRIPTURE READING FOR MARCH 12, 2023 @ CAPC OAKLAND

### LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

**Exodus** is the second book of the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Bible. It tells the story of how the descendants of the great family of Sarah and Abraham come to be enslaved by Pharaoh in the constricting lands of Egypt. It tells of the exodus – their delivery by God’s hand – and the wanderings in the wilderness as they search for God’s promised land flowing with milk and honey. Moses and the Israelite people are the main characters of the story.

The people *quarreled* | *complained* :: at times translated as “murmured” and “grumbled. The Israelites had just grumbled about the bitterness of the water that they found in Marah. (Exodus 15:22-27. The Hebrew word Marah sounds like “bitter”). We see the Israelites throughout the desert wanderings grumble against Moses and Aaron whenever they faced a crisis (Exodus 16:2; 17:3; Numbers 14:2; 16:11, 41). Paul in refers back to this story in 1 Corinthians 10, asserting that the story of the Israelites being delivered from slavery in Egypt is all the spiritual story of us all.

**Massah and Meribah**:: It’s thought that Massah meaning “testing” and Meribah means “rebellion” in Hebrew. This is also spoken of in Psalm 95:5-9: “<sup>6</sup> O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! <sup>7</sup> For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. O that today you would listen to his voice! <sup>8</sup>Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,<sup>9</sup> when your ancestors tested me and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.”

**John** is the fourth of the four gospels in the Second Testament. The gospels are the telling of the story of the life of Jesus of Nazareth and his teachings. John is most likely the last of the four to be written down as it contains a more developed theological content, and heavy use of metaphor. The story of the Samaritan woman and Jesus at the well is told only by John.

*Сamaritan*:: Samaritan, member of a community, now nearly extinct, that claims to be related by blood to those Israelites of ancient Samaria who were not deported by the Assyrian conquerors of the kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE. Their worship style and cultural practice diverged from the “classic” Israelites during the years of the Babylonian Exile as the Samaritans remained in the land. Their most significant difference was that the Jesuses held that God resided and was centered in Most Zion in Jerusalem, whereas the Samaritans believed God chose Mount Gerizim near Shechem.

This remained a considerable matter of dispute between the two communities, and, in the 2nd century BCE, the temple on Mount Gerizim was destroyed by the Maccabean ruler (Jewish) John Hyrcanus (reigned 135/134–104 BCE).

This difference led the Classic Israelites to look down upon the Samaritans as less than equal, quasi-heretical, not true believers.

### Exodus 17:1-7 NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

<sup>1</sup> From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. <sup>2</sup> The people *quarreled* with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.” Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?” <sup>3</sup> But the people thirsted there for water, and the people *complained* against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?” <sup>4</sup> So Moses cried out to the Lord, “What shall I do for this people? They are almost ready to stone me.” <sup>5</sup> The Lord said to Moses, “Go on ahead of the people and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile and go. <sup>6</sup> I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.” Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. <sup>7</sup> He called the place **Massah** and **Meribah**, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

### John 4:5-42 NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

<sup>5</sup> So [Jesus] came to a *Samaritan* city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup> Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about *noon*.

<sup>7</sup> A *Samaritan woman* came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.”

<sup>8</sup> (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) <sup>9</sup> 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.)

<sup>10</sup> 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**." <sup>11</sup> The woman said to him, "SIR, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that **LIVING WATER**? <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" <sup>13</sup> Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> 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." <sup>15</sup> 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."

<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." <sup>17</sup> The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband,' <sup>18</sup> for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" <sup>19</sup> The woman said to him, "SIR, I see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but **you** say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when **you** will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> **You** worship what **you** do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> But **THE HOUR** is coming and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in *spirit and truth*." <sup>25</sup> 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." <sup>26</sup> Jesus said to her, "I AM HE, the one who is speaking to you."

<sup>27</sup> 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?" <sup>28</sup> Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, <sup>29</sup> "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" <sup>30</sup> They left the city and were on their way to him.

<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." <sup>32</sup> But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." <sup>33</sup> So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?" <sup>34</sup> Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. <sup>35</sup> Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'?

#### LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

**LIVING WATER** :: as in flowing water, not stagnant in a pool. Jesus has used this expression to talk of the Holy Spirit in. John 7:37-38 – "<sup>37</sup> On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, <sup>38</sup> and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of **LIVING WATER**.'" <sup>39</sup> Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive, for as yet there was no Spirit because Jesus was not yet glorified."

It also echoed in the expression of **ETERNAL LIFE** in verse 14.

**ETERNAL**:: αἰώνιος pronounced aiónios means both:

1) **ACELONG, ETERNAL** – as in beyond or outside time; and also

2) **ABUNDANT** --- focuses on the quality of life lived - **A GOOD, RICH, WELL-LIVED, OR ABUNDANT LIFE**. It does not focus on the future per se, but rather on the quality of the age (165 /aión) it relates to. Thus believers live in "**ETERNAL** (aiónios) life" right now, experiencing this quality of God's life now as a present possession. (Note the Greek present tense of having eternal life in Jn 3:36, 5:24, 6:47; cf. Ro 6:23.)).

**GUSHING UP** this is a vigorous expression meaning more like "leaping up" than water gurgling. Jesus talks of such life in John 10:10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

**You** – this is a plural you – as in y'all.

**THE HOUR**, in the gospel of John this expression is used to refer to the moment of God's glory being revealed in the crucifixion of Jesus. In 2:4 Jesus says "My hour has not yet come". The forward momentum of Jesus' hour in the Gospel of John reaches a climax at the Cross, "Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father" (13:1). It's last used in the scene of the crucifixion at the death of Jesus in 17:1 - "After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you.'"

But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting.<sup>36</sup> The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.<sup>37</sup> For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.'<sup>38</sup> I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

<sup>39</sup> Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done."<sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days.<sup>41</sup> And many more believed because of his word.<sup>42</sup> 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 Savior of the world.*"

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- How could the Israelites go so quickly from gratitude for being delivered from slavery into freedom to grumbling and complaining, wishing that they were back in Egypt where at least they had creature comforts? How can you identify with that confused longing and mis-understanding of freedom?
- Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman writes of the Samaritan woman: "She needs to not be defined by the worst parts of her life, the number of her husbands, or others' assumptions, but to be seen through the lens of mutual need—to be seen as one of the first witnesses of the Messiah, and now a vessel of living water herself." This story actually communicates interdependence between Jesus the woman the disciples and the townsfolk as opposed to a hierarchical Jesus (the man) helping the Samaritan (the woman). the ways it communicates interdependence. Contemplating that how might you see this story in a new way, through the lens of mutuality?
- Compare and contrast Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman with Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus (John 3:1-17). In both stories, Jesus engages in a long conversation one-on-one with a person, speaking of the Spirit and eternal life. Consider the time of day and settings for each story. Compare the identity and status of Nicodemus the Pharisee to the unnamed Samaritan woman. Compare how Jesus interacts with each person, and how Nicodemus and the woman respond to Jesus. What is each person seeking? What does each person gain? In looking at these stories side-by-side, what do you learn about Jesus? to be a blessing to others?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, as a church – to act, speak, be or change through this word of scripture?

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*spirit and truth.*": This expression echoes what the gospel writer has already said in the prologue – chapter 1 - "<sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup> He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. <sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of *grace and truth.* <sup>15</sup> (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' ") <sup>16</sup> From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup> The law indeed was given through Moses; *grace and truth* came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known."

I AM HE :: this is the only time in the gospel, before his trial at the end of the story, that Jesus says that he is the Messiah (John 18:8). Curiously he does it here with those (Samaritans, a woman) that would normally be considered inferior people in classic Jewish society of his day and age.

*the Savior of the world* :: the confession of faith of the townsfolk echoes what the gospel writer has just expressed in the preceding chapter John 3:16-17 --<sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him."