



# THE NEW SHOFAR

Christ flows in our lives like a waterfall

Life is to be found even in life's "rocks"

## LENT 3

### *'Is Yahweh among us or not?'*

What would we accept as being a credible sign of the presence of *God among us*? Think of those Hebrew people in the wilderness. Would they have been convinced by any sign? Look what they had already experienced: The victory of God over Pharaoh and the many signs that accompanied the victory. The actual escape and Passover. Then there was the rush to the Red Sea, the crossing of the sea and the destruction of the armies of Egypt. Just as amazing was them being fed with manna and quails from heaven. That would be more than enough to satisfy me and for me to accept the divine presence working away within my little world.

Immediately after the provision of water, Midian attacks the Hebrews and they panic. Even the water was not enough to convince them of the reality – God was walking with them, alongside of them to a divinely appointed destination. It is God who provides the guarantee of arriving, even in the face of apparently insurmountable obstacles. What they need to be doing is getting on with the walking. It is in the walking the grace of God is most at work.

### *God gave the water but Moses struck the rock*

One of the key features of the story is the way God worked. God's grace was working but it was still up to Moses to collaborate in this saving event. He had to believe enough in God to obey, to do something seemingly quite senseless – hitting a rock when looking for water. Water did not flow just because God wanted it to flow. What God expected was human action in the provision of life saving water. It is not a simple matter of sitting back and waiting for God to act. He has already acted and continues to act and has acted decisively in the life, death, resurrection and ascension of His Son, Jesus the Christ. God has nothing more to do apart from inviting us to step up and take part in this divine activity all around us. Trust and obey; hear and act; believe and set about living what we believe. Salvation is not all a one-way street, it is an invitation awaiting a human faith response.

### *The water I give will become in you a spring of water gushing up*

A part of the beauty of this account of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan water is the way He promises her an endless spring of water, one that will not be a quiet pool but an eruption of flowing water. This water animates life. It not only removes all sediments and "algae" from a person's heart, it comes with an all-powerful force behind it. There is no sense of sitting still or becoming stagnant. This "grace"/water given by Christ flows ever new within us.

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Yesterday's water is already gone, already stale and if we have not used it, we remain "thirsting" still.

***true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth***

The Samaritan woman understands the idea of worshipping God on the top of a mountain – for her it is Mt Gerizim. The Jews too worship God on top of their own mountain – the temple mount was Mount Moriah. As it was with most of the ancient nations in the region, the people believed their gods dwelt on the mountain tops as these tops seem to reach up into heaven. Temples and sanctuaries were all on high spots.

In Christ, these things have changed. His grace flows where He resides – among His people. Forms, postures, ceremonials, sacraments, liturgies, vestments holy days, and places are not condemned, but we are now told they are inefficacious without a living Christ in our lives. What then is this *spirit and truth*? The easiest way to understand what Jesus is saying is to speak of it in terms of *the spring of water gushing up* within us. Our primary way of worshipping God is by drinking/using the grace we have been offered at baptism.

But this *rushing water* is not a one-off event. It is not a pool we need to visit if we desire a drink. It is gushing up and it keeps on gushing up in every moment of our lives. We need not search for the water as it is in our hearts. What is required is for us to drink of it, to use it to satiate our needs and empower us for whatever is going on around us. This is why Jesus does not need a bucket. There are no hindrances to us drinking. It is there when we need it.

***Is Jesus among us?***

In so many ways we are similar to the Hebrews in the wilderness. As they milled around complaining about God and abusing Moses for his failures, God had their water all under control. They simply could not believe it. What they should have believed was that God was with them and as long as they kept walking towards Canaan, the water would flow. But they wanted the water flowing without having to walk on in faith. They wanted the water before they would further commit themselves to a life in Canaan.

This is where the message of the story of this Samaritan woman is of such importance today. Our struggles as a faith community in an unbelieving and sometimes hostile world only become problems for us when we stop the onward focus of our pilgrimage and wait for a divine solution. We would like the "water" first and then we will get moving.

What Jesus shows us is that with Him within us, grace flows in a most powerful way, gushing up inside of us. Take all of the images associated with water here: new life, strength, eroding, washing, purifying, freshness, etc – it is not difficult to see what is offered to our parish and to ourselves as individual believers. All of this "grace" is already ours, is ever new and refreshing, as long as we are collaborating with the saving works of God in Christ, while we do what Jesus did and live as Jesus lived. These things we achieve by using God's grace.

The words of command *go and do* are found over 1,200 times in our Bible and represent the nature of our relationship with God. Faith is about *going* and *doing* the will of God. Belief

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without this is simply not enough, just as acting without grace is doomed to failure. *Note* how the Samaritan woman discovered the living water and then turned and went back to her village. It is in the going out we can recognise the grace of God at work in the world.