From Wilderness to Resurrection Hope

Lent 3: Reconciliation Made Possible

Readings: Exodus 17.1-7, Romans 5. 1-11, John 4. 5-42

The Land we call the Holy, is a place where geography and theology are woven together. A place where different stories and experiences are locked in a fatal embrace. As such it's a fitting place to reflect on reconciliation, because reconciliation is never abstract here. It is always embodied. Always contested. Always costly. And yet, we dare to dream that it is possible.

Our readings today take us to places of tension and thirst, both literal and spiritual and invite us to see how God meets people there with grace.

The story from Exodus begins with a people on the move, newly freed, but still hurting. The Israelites are in the wilderness, thirsty, disorientated and frightened. Their liberation from Egypt has not yet translated into trust in God. They're angry with Moses "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us with thirst?" You can hear Moses' frustration with the people echoing down the ages, "What shall I do with this people?" he asks God

This is not just a story about water. It's a story about relationship. About what happens when challenge and hardship erode hope and trust. The wilderness exposes our deepest fears and it is in that place of disorientation that God meets the Israelites. Water flows from the rock and life is sustained. Even in complaint and conflict, God remains present.

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Paul, writing to the Romans, takes us deeper still. He speaks not of physical thirst, but of relational fracture and healing. "Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Peace here does not mean the absence of struggle. It means reconciliation. A restored relationship where hostility has been overcome though love. Through God reaching out and meeting us at our lowest point. "While we were still weak… while we were still sinners… Christ died for us." God does not wait for us to get it right. God moves toward us in love first. Reconciliation is made possible because God chooses mercy over judgement, relationship over rejection.

And then we come to the Gospel reading, one of the most intimate and disruptive encounters in the New Testament. Jesus meets a Samaritan woman at a well. It's noon, the heat of the day. She is alone and she is carrying layers of social, religious, and personal exclusion.

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Lent 3: Reconciliation Made Possible (continued)

EMBRACE the Middle East

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This is a meeting that should not happen. In the world of Jesus and the woman, Jews and Samaritans do not associate. Men do not speak publicly with women who are strangers. Rabbis do not engage those with questionable reputations. And yet Jesus asks her for a drink. It's a simple request but it crosses every social boundary.

What unfolds in their conversation is a revelation. Jesus names her thirst, not just for water, but alongside all those who stand in the margins of society, her need for dignity, truth, and belonging. He does not shame her. He sees her. And in being seen, she is transformed. Jesus offers her living water. The chance of a life rooted in relationship with God. The one who came to ask for a drink of water becomes the one who brings living water to her whole community.

This story shows us what reconciliation looks like in the Gospel. It begins with encounter. With listening. With staying present long enough for truth to emerge. Jesus does not deny difference. He does not gloss over history. He does not pretend pain does not exist but neither does he allow those things to have the final word.

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The wilderness is not just as a place of danger, but as a place of possibility. In the wilderness, Israel learns to trust in God. In the wilderness, of our lives Christ restores God's relationship with us. And at the well, in the heat of the day, a woman finds her voice and her worth is restored.

These readings encapsulate the journey of Lent. From wilderness to resurrection hope. From fracture to reconciliation. From thirst to life giving water. These texts are not just stories to admire, they demand something of us. They invite us to ask ourselves, what are the conversations we avoid because they make us uncomfortable? Whose are the voices we choose not to hear? What divisions have we accepted as intractable? As we grapple with these challenges, these readings teach us that God invites us to trust, to endure, to hope and to cross the boundaries that divide us

Reconciliation is never easy. It is often slow. And it always asks something of us, humility, courage, and the willingness to remain present when walking away would be easier. But our Lenten journey teaches us that reconciliation becomes possible because God has already made the first move

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Lent 3: Reconciliation Made Possible (continued)

Here in the Holy Land, where new wounds are layered on old scars, these readings are not theoretical. They remind us that resurrection hope does not come by denying the wilderness but by trusting that God meets us within it. The wilderness is present wherever people live with fear, injustice, occupation, displacement, or the daily struggle for dignity. The thirst we hear in Exodus echoes in communities who still ask, "Is the Lord among us, or not?"

And yet, just as God brought water from the rock, and just as Jesus crossed boundaries to meet a woman at the well, reconciliation continues to be made possible often quietly, faithfully, and at great cost.

Across this land, Embrace partners choose encounter over division, service over despair, and hope over resignation. They work in places where trust has been broken, where communities are weary, and where the wounds of conflict run deep. Like Jesus, these partners meet people where they are, not asking first who they are, or where they come from, but recognising their shared humanity. They offer signs of living water in places of deep thirst. Reconciliation does not mean pretending the pain isn't real. It means refusing to believe that pain gets the final word.

And so this Lent, as we journey from wilderness to resurrection hope, we are invited to choose how we will respond. We can choose to stand alongside those working for justice and peace. We can choose to support Embrace the Middle East financially, enabling local partners to continue their life-giving work. We can choose to pray, and to act trusting that even small acts of hope and solidarity can help make reconciliation possible.

May we be people who draw deeply from the living water Christ offers and who help to ensure that others may drink too.

Amen.

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