

Mercy As Accessible As the Nearest Water Tap
March 20, 2022, Third Sunday of Lent
Gospel of John 4:5-42
Fr. Brad

In the struggles of life we all face, we must grapple with our human appetites that, unbridled can take us over. Lent can be a time for taking inventory on those appetites and putting into practice new habits.

Our reading from Exodus today speaks to our human nature. It somehow expresses our often discontent at the seeming endless hardships we endure through life and our response to them. Curbing some of our unhealthy appetites, habits, or patterns of behaviour is work. It means transcending **impulse and convenience**. It's like learning a new skill through endless practicing. One of our impulses is to complain when things do not go our way or when our timelines or agendas are interrupted.

In our Exodus reading **we can** in many ways **relate to the people** who were becoming discontented after spending so much time in the desert. **We can also relate to Moses**.

Moses was leading a **people** who were **becoming increasingly high maintenance**. As time went on they began muttering and questioning why they were where they were and where they were going. They were **more and more doubting God** was with them. They were beginning to ask, 'Would God really put us through all this?'

Moses also appears to be losing his composure a little here when he says, "What shall I do with this people." Hard to blame him though.

Have you ever been badgered incessantly by complainers? Picture yourself in a leadership position, and those you are leading begin questioning you and casting doubt on you and your decision-making (and not in a constructive way). You are trying to be faithful to your role but instead of getting words of thanks, you are peppered with snide cynicism. That can get to a person eventually.

Our teen-age children can be very high maintenance requiring much patience and stamina.

When we are trying our best to make things go the way we think is right and discovering we are not getting the outcome we are expecting, we may well be tempted to say, '**Is the Lord with us or not?**' **Are we then not putting God to the test?** At that point we have no choice but to admit then that our faith and trust in God is not what it could be.

If we have truly turned our lives and outcomes over to God, there is nothing left to do but trust him, no matter how bad things get. That was God's invitation to the Israelites in the desert and to Moses himself - - to trust no matter what, and stay faithful. That means not falling back into old patterns of thinking or behaviour. It means reminding ourselves that if God has brought us this far, God will see us through.

In our 12 step Lenten journey, which Fr. John and I are following during these weeks of Lent, today we reflect on steps 5 and 6. We admit to God and others we have been wrong about things and that we are aware of our sins our shortfalls and we are ready to offer them up to God and ask God to heal us from our past sins that we may never revert to old patterns. Ever forward, no going backward. The Israelites were never going back to Egypt.

In our Gospel today, Jesus encounters the woman at the well and He asks her to get him a drink. He speaks directly to a hunger and thirst within her which no bucket of water, no marital partner, nothing in and of this world can satisfy. She makes an honest inventory of her own life with Jesus and is clearly ready to have God remove all these defects of character. She is completely transparent with Him about her past and Jesus acknowledges and names her deepest longing and hunger with her and satisfies it. Her reaction - - she leaves her bucket behind, and runs off to tell those back home, to shout to all who can hear, come and see!

'Come and see the man who told me everything I have ever done,' she proclaims.

She felt listened to, acknowledged, understood, and loved. These are among the first steps of a trusting relationship in which transformation becomes possible. Regardless of what are our desires, shortfalls, or struggles are, **if we can acknowledge them to someone** and not be shunned or shamed for it, we are somehow empowered to move forward and let go of what we are ashamed of and join the human race.

When Jesus asks the Samaritan woman to care for him, he starts a process that brings her from a sense of worthlessness to discipleship.

As St. Paul says, 'Christ died for us **while we were still in our sin** - - not after we found a way back to Him ourselves on our own power. That's why we give thanks, because it is a free gift, offered for us to accept and learn to live by. And we don't learn instantly.

But hopefully we learn not to be stingy in sharing God's mercy. Once received, we pass it on to others who also may be feeling unworthy. Ron Rolheiser says, *'The mercy of God is as accessible as the nearest water tap, a mercy that has no price tag.'*

We must not ration sharing God's mercy and love as though it were a commodity meant only for those who are somehow deserving. It is not a matter of proving ourselves worthy of it before it is dispensed. That is not God's way.

The Lord wants everyone to come to the waters of His divine mercy and love. **We may be God's nearest water tap for the sake of the people for whom He thirsts.**

May each of us find and receive His tender mercy and then become vessels of that grace and mercy for others. Amen.