

Lectionary readings: Exodus 17: 1-7; Psalm 95; Romans 5: 1-11; John 4: 5-42 (3rd Sunday in Lent)

For reflection and prayer

- **Exodus 17:** The people of Israel were wishing they were back in Egypt. Had they forgotten how awful life had been in Egypt? Rather like us, when we talk of the 'good old days'. How important it is for us to accept what is, and find God with us where we are, rather than harking back to the past with its illusion of well-being. How quick we are, like the Israelites, to complain about our lot instead of turning to God who alone can help us to find healing, life-giving water - the water of His presence - and wisdom and courage to cope with whatever we are faced with. Let's try that this week, facing up to what is and opening ourselves to God who is present with us.
- **Psalm 95:** This is a psalm of praise and an invitation to give thanks to the God who has invited us into His friendship and to journey with Him through life. I was struck by a paraphrase from 'Psalms for Praying': *'For life is but a breath in the Eternal Dance, a gift to be revered with trust, an opportunity to grow in spirit and in truth, that in passing into new life, you enter the Heavenly City.'* Let's join with God in the 'Eternal Dance' of life this week and see our circumstances as an opportunity to grow in our faith and enter into the new life to which God is inviting us.
- **Romans 5:** Here are some verses from The Message to reflect on: *'We throw open our doors to God and discover at the same moment that He has already*

thrown open His door to us We find ourselves standing ... in the wide open spaces of God's grace and glory.... We can't round up enough containers to hold everything God generously pours into our lives through the Holy Spirit.' Paul says we need to continue to praise God in our troubles because they keep us alert to Him, to where He is and what He is doing in our lives. Many think that trouble and suffering are a sign of God's displeasure or abandonment. Not so! Our lives can actually expand and deepen as we allow God into them more and more. So let's allow God to bring about an enlargement and deepening of our lives as we open ourselves to Him this week.

- **John 4:** Jesus recognises no barriers - everyone is included in His mission. How can it be otherwise for the church, the people of God, in whom the Spirit of God dwells? Unless our churches are inclusive and all-embracing, they are not in line with Jesus' mission. The Samaritan woman was shunned by her own people, but Jesus accepted her and treated her with love and compassion. Let's open ourselves to God's grace this week so that we reach out with love and acceptance to all we meet. *'What you're called will not matter, and where you go to worship will not matter. It's who you are and the way you live that count before God. Your worship must engage your spirit That's the kind of people the Father is out looking for: those who are simply and honestly themselves before Him in their worship.'* (verses 22-24 The Message) God is interested in our hearts; He doesn't recognise man-made labels; nor is He concerned about where we worship, so long as our hearts are open to Him. This is worth reflecting on this week. Is the building where we worship more important than our relationship with God?