

Third Sunday of Lent – March 15, 2020

Exodus 17: 3-7 – Romans 5:1-2, 5-8 – John 4:5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42

I have suggested over the last couple of weeks that we consider, during this Season of Lent, the efforts that God makes toward us. That is a clear lesson to us in God's word to us today.

We heard first about how God acted on behalf of the Israelites in the desert. Through Moses God had led them out of Egypt, delivering them from slavery. By an act of God the waters of the sea had been parted and they were rescued from the pursuing Egyptians. God responded to complaints about hunger, providing them with quail and manna. Still, they were not satisfied. Even worse, they appeared not to trust God after all that had happened for them. Once again, they grumbled. They were like spoiled children. Our human reaction would most probably been to call them ungrateful and simply forget them. But, once again, God reaches out. From the very unlikely source of a rock, God provided water. It is a sign of God's limitless, overflowing love.

The Gospel account goes even further in illustrating God's efforts. In our contemporary era, with current values, we may not appreciate all that we are told in this incident. In the encounter with the woman, Jesus acts contrary to many human norms of his society. For example, speaking with a Samaritan, one regarded as a heretic, was to be shunned because Jesus was

interacting with someone not of his own people. Even more difficult to understand was the fact that he was publicly speaking with a woman. No rabbi, no teacher, would ever do something like this. Jesus asks for a drink, and needs to make use of the woman's utensil to do so. This was contrary to the dietary laws of his tradition. What we are to understand, from the Gospel-writer John's recoding the details of this event, is that it demonstrates how the ministry of Jesus reflects the efforts of God. Jesus reaches far beyond human limitations to make evident God's desire to reach out to us, to be joined with us.

Saint Paul had come to an understanding of the actions of God in his life and in his ministry. He declares, as we have heard, that an abundance has been provided to those who are faithfully in union with God. It is the abundance of the great force of love that is poured into us through the action of the Spirit of God, most especially through the waters of baptism. It is the abundance of God's desire to be reconciled with us that is to motivate and encourage us in whatever efforts we make this Lent.

The generous goodness of God is evident in the efforts God makes toward us. Our response is to live and to act with the same generosity of mind, heart and spirit in our lives. It is in this way that we are to reflect and reveal the nature and the presence of our loving union with our good and gracious God.