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Sunday Mass Study Notes for Lectionary 28: 03-08-2026



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes. This week, we begin with the Book of Exodus, where we will see how Moses is following God's instruction to bring water from a rock. Then we move to Romans Chapter 5 where we will discover Saint Paul's explanation of how Christians are justified by faith alone. Then we study an amazing encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well.

Introduction to the First Reading:

The first reading is from Exodus Chapter 17. The context of the passage was a few months after Moses guided the Hebrew nation out of Egypt, where they had been subject to slavery for 400 years after Joseph's reign with the Pharaoh. Interestingly, the phrase "out of Egypt" is one of the most recurring themes in the Bible. God had provided them with manna some months earlier (Exodus 16:14). They had just left the Wilderness of Sin and had camped at a place called Rephidim after camping at other places along the way. This was right before the Amalekites attacked the defenseless Hebrews at that location (Exodus 17:8-16). We included the first two verses in order to

add context for you while you read.

First Reading:

> *1 Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin, according to the command of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink. 2 Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water that we may drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" 3 But the people thirsted there for water; and they grumbled against Moses and said, "Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" 4 So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me." 5 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us, or not?" (Exodus 17:1-7)*

Moses said that the congregation of Israel journeyed "by stages," meaning that they made other stops along the way. Numbers Chapter 33 said that they made three stops between the Wilderness of Sin and Rephidim (Numbers 33:12-14), indicating that these in-between campsites may have been less eventful than what happened here. Here, Moses encountered serious opposition to the point that he was concerned that if the conflict wasn't resolved, the people would stone him (v. 4c). It was so significant that Moses even named the place Massah and Meribah after the conflict (v. 7), words which mean "testing" and "contending." The people commanded Moses to give them water to drink, along with their animals (vv. 2-3). The significant point is that rather than pray to God themselves to ask for water, the people "quarreled" with Moses, who was their obvious intercessor between them and God (v. 2). Moses asked the question, "Why do you test the LORD?" (v. 2e). A clue to what the people meant by this can be found in verse 7: "He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, 'Is the LORD among us, or not?'" They doubted that God was still watching over them and providing for them. This is amazing because God had just delivered them from the army of the Egyptians just a few months earlier, and was guiding them in their journeys through a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21)! How soon they forgot about God's divine deliverance of them from their slavery in Egypt, His supernatural parting of the Red Sea and His subsequent visible leadership on their journey!

As the story continued, Moses prayed on behalf of the people, something he did frequently, as he was one of the most prayerful people in the Bible. Moses' prayer was something which shouldn't be taken for granted, as he evidently prayed so hard and so long for the people in the subsequent battle against the Amalekites that men had to hold his arms up (Exodus 17:12). God could have just provided water immediately upon Moses' request, but instead He answered Moses' prayer in a way that revealed Moses' authority as a leader of the people along with the elders.

The truth that emerges from the text is that everyone has access to God's miraculous provision through prayer without needing an intercessor. Moses was their intercessor between them and God, and, theologically, was what is called a "type of Christ," meaning he prefigured the Lord Jesus Christ. As believers in the risen Lord Jesus, we have direct access to God's miraculous powers through prayer, and our Intercessor lives in our hearts through God the Holy Spirit. When we face difficult challenges in life, God calls us to turn to Him in prayer and to ask others to pray on our behalf, as Moses did for the Hebrew Nation. The Hebrew people turned to Moses to pray for them instead of the God that they could see in the pillars. God calls us to turn to the God that we can't see. James said in the New Testament Book by his name, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (James 5:16). The Book of Hebrews says, "Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). The Apostle John in 1 John 5 said the following:

> *13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. 14 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. (1 John 5:13-15)*

We can rest in the fact that God receives our prayers *faster* than the speed of light. Although we don't always agree with the outcome or the timing of God's answer, we can have peace that God works on our behalf for our own good (Romans 8:28), regardless of our feelings.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

The second reading is from Chapter 5 in the Book of Romans. In the previous chapter, Paul explained that God justifies sinners on the basis of their faith in Jesus alone and challenged the false

notion in the Roman church that, although believers receive salvation by grace alone, they preserve it by their good works.

Read the text, noting that additional verses were added for context.

Second Reading:

> *1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. 6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:1-8)*

Paul began by connecting this section of teaching to his previous teaching on justification by faith. "Therefore, having been justified by faith" (v. 1a). He said that believers have a new relationship with God, one of peace, through the Lord Jesus Christ. He went on to say that believers have hope in seeing the glory of God and that they can persevere during their trials because this produces godly character, which in turn produces hope (vv. 3-4). Finally, Paul made an amazing statement about how Jesus died for us while we were still in our sinful state. He said, "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly" v. 6). He continued, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (v. 8, emphasis added). Notice the phrase, "But God." God's direct involvement in the affairs of our lives greatly reassures us of the reality of His love for us! God loved us so much that he gave his only begotten Son for us (John 3:16). He did this with the full awareness of the *future* sins that we would commit, yet He went through with a humiliating death on the cross for us anyway. As we approach Good Friday, think about the magnitude of Jesus' sacrifice for us. Moses left a heavenly palace in the court of the Pharaoh in order to deliver the Hebrew slaves from bondage, so that they might find rest in the Promised Land. Jesus left the realities of Heaven in order to deliver us from the bondage of our sin, so that we might find rest in His eternal home, our Promised Land. May we continue to appreciate and adore our Savior for what He did for us!

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Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

The Gospel reading covers a story of Jesus freeing a woman from the bondage of sin. While we may or may not be able to relate to her particular sin struggle (sexual immorality), we can all relate to the problem of looking for love in all the wrong places.

Gospel Reading:

> *5 So He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; 6 and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. 7 There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." 8 For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. 9 Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) 10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." 11 She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? 12 "You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?" 13 Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." 15 The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw." 16 He said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here." 17 The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband'; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly." 19 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." 25 The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us." 26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He." 27 At this point His disciples came, and they were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman, yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why do You speak with her?" 28 So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city and said to the men, 29 "Come, see a man who*

> *told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?" 30 They went out of the city, and were coming to Him. 31 Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." 32 But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." 33 So the disciples were saying to one another, "No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?" 34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work. 35 "Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. 36 Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. 37 For in this case the saying is true, 'One sows and another reaps.' 38 I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor." 39 From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all the things that I have done." 40 So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. 41 Many more believed because of His word; 42 and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world." (John 4:5-42)*

Some key observations from the text include:

- This story of misunderstandings shows that Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior of the world
- He shows Himself to those who are seeking to worship God in spirit and in truth (not just to the religious elite)
- While she is seeking validation and significance through temporal realities (water, wells, religious argumentation, human relationships), Jesus wants to open her heart up to eternal realities (living water that will truly satisfy her soul, a life that is regenerated and empowered by the Holy Spirit, a life that is not afraid of the truth).
- Jesus loves her enough to break through her misguided notions about where life comes from and to help her see that He is the Messiah, the anointed Deliverer, who saves people from their sins.

- As a result of her changed life, others see the reality of Jesus and believe in Him as their own Savior.

What about you? Are you thirsty?

It's easy to look with judgment on this poor Samaritan woman, who was looking for love in all the wrong places. She bumps into Jesus one day and gets a whole new lesson on her need for a Savior. But as Christians, we can grow cold to our need for a Savior. But, if we're honest, we have our own broken cisterns that don't satisfy our deep thirst:

- Finding approval from others
- Achieving goals and accomplishing things
- Perfectionism
- Religiosity
- Looking to others for our sense of identity and validation

It's easy to do what this woman did and argue about places and forms of worship, to punt to mystery, to look for love in all the wrong places.

What religious conundrums do you throw in Jesus' face when he is trying to deal with spiritual life issues? What strategies do you use to deflect the painful sense of thirst that gnaws at your soul?

He is patient and keeps pressing us to come out of hiding and be honest: to worship Him in Spirit and in truth. But what does it look like to drink this living water, to become true worshipers?

It looks like a relationship with Jesus. Do you have this? Are you pursuing Him? Are you letting Him love you, speak to you, fill you, and change you?

Reflection Questions

1. One of the common themes for this week's reading has to do with being delivered from the bondage of sin. In what ways does sin feel like slavery or bondage? How does Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well reassure you that he is powerful enough to free you from the bondage and penalty of sin? How would you respond if He offered you living water?

2. How are you like the Hebrew people? Re-read the 1 Corinthians 11 passage and take a personal inventory. How can this story be instructive to you in your life? Ask yourself who in your circle of believing friends and relatives prays for you regularly. Ask yourself for whom you have been praying recently.

Second, reach out to one other believer this week with a specific prayer request and ask them to pray for this issue throughout the week. Finally, ask the person with whom you communicated how you may pray for them in one specific way this week.

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1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. 6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:1-8)

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- This story of misunderstandings shows that Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior of the world
- He shows Himself to those who are seeking to worship God in spirit and in truth (not just to the religious elite)
- While she is seeking validation and significance through temporal realities (water, wells, religious argumentation, human relationships), Jesus is wanting to open her heart up to eternal realities (living water that will truly satisfy her soul, a life that is regenerated and empowered by the Holy Spirit, a life that is not afraid of the truth).
- Jesus loves her enough to break through her misguided notions of where life comes from and helps her to see that He is the Messiah, the anointed Deliverer, to save people from their sins.
- As a result of her changed life, others see the reality of Jesus and believe in Him as their own Savior.

It's easy to look with judgment on this poor Samaritan woman, who was looking for love in all the wrong places. She bumps into Jesus one day and gets a whole new lesson on her need for a Savior. But as Christians, we can grow cold to our need for a Savior. But, if we're honest, we have our own broken cisterns that don't satisfy our deep thirst:

- Finding approval from others
- Achieving goals and accomplishing things
- Perfectionism
- Religiosity
- Looking to others for our sense of identity and validation

It's easy to do what this woman did and argue about places and forms of worship, to punt to mystery, to look for love in all the wrong places. What religious conundrums do you throw into Jesus' face when he is trying to deal with spiritual life issues? What strategies do you use to deflect the painful sense of thirst that gnaws at your soul?

God is patient and keeps pressing us to come out of hiding and be honest: to worship Him in Spirit and in truth. But what does it look like to drink this living water, to become true worshipers? It looks like a relationship with Jesus.

Reflection Questions

1. One of the common themes for this week's reading has to do with being delivered from the bondage of sin. In what ways does sin feel like slavery or bondage? How does Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well reassure you that he is powerful enough to free you from the bondage and penalty of sin? How would you respond if He offered you living water?

2. How are you like the Hebrew people? Re-read the 1 Cor. 11 passage and take a personal inventory. How can this story be instructive to you in your life? Ask yourself who in your circle of believing friends and relatives prays for you on a regular basis. Ask yourself for whom you have been praying recently.

Second, reach out to one other believer this week with a specific prayer request and ask them to pray regarding this one specific issue throughout the week. Finally, ask the person with whom you communicated how you may pray for them in one specific way this week.

Sunday Mass Study Notes of 03-07-2021



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Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes. First, this week we discuss the Old Testament reading from Exodus in which we will take a substantial look at the Ten Commandments. Because of the importance of this topic, we will dedicate most of this week's study to it. During that study you will see how wise God was to establish His chosen people with these foundational rules for living. We will also learn how many of these are repeated in the New Testament and expanded upon by Jesus. Then we look at four very profound verses from the opening chapter of Saint Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians before we discuss Jesus' first Passover celebration with His newly gathered group of disciples. Finally, as we look forward to celebrating Easter in just a few weeks, we reflect upon the importance of Jesus' celebration of the Passover as we study the Gospel lesson from John 2.

Introduction to the First Reading:

The first reading is from the Book of Exodus in which we see God giving the Ten Commandments to Moses. These statements are essentially a restatement of the Jewish Law. We often think of rules in a negative light. Instead, we should consider God was gracious to His people in giving them these elements of the Law, which was for their benefit. This is because if they followed these with their whole heart it would help them to live life according to His design and accomplish the basic calling that He had given to them. This would be their greatest joy. After Noah and his family had landed and departed from the ark God said, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (Genesis 9:1b). As you read the Commandments, meditate upon how keeping them helps you to accomplish God's purposes for your life and can help you to live according to the Designer's specifications.

First Reading:

Exodus 20:1-17 NAS95 1 Then God spoke all these words, saying, 2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3 You shall have no other gods before Me. 4 You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. 7 You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. 8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh

day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy. 12 Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. 13 You shall not murder. 14 You shall not commit adultery. 15 You shall not steal. 16 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 17 You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Before we enumerate the Commandments, the question may arise, are Christians in the Church Age bound to the Ten Commandments? To understand the answer we must remember that there were three types of Law in the Old Testament: civil law, ceremonial law, and moral law. As Christians we live not under the Law but under grace (Romans 6:14), and are not citizens of the Theocratic Kingdom as were the Jews in the Old Testament. Christians are not bound to Jewish ceremonial law, but are bound to aspects of the civil law to the extent that they follow either biblical absolutes or biblical principles repeated in the New Testament. In fact, a total of nine out of the Ten Commandments are clearly repeated in the New Testament with the exception of the Sabbath Day, which we will discuss below. As Christians, we also pledge to uphold the moral law found in the Old Testament because this stems from the holiness of God and does not change. In fact, Jesus Himself taught on and expanded these Ten Commandments in His Sermon on the Mount (found in Matthew 5-7). Mt 5:17-20 records Jesus' opening thoughts from the Sermon on the Mount: "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."

So, the answer to the opening question is "yes" New Testament Christians are wise to follow the moral law found in the Old Testament, including the Ten Commandments. But as Jesus stated, our righteousness must exceed the outward appearance of righteousness, as was displayed in the Pharisees. Instead, our righteousness must come from the inside out, the fruit of a changed heart that is surrendered to God's will (Ezekiel 36:26).

The following is a list of the Ten Commandments from the reading along with some notes about each, including a reference to the respective verses in the New Testament. The number of the

commandments has historically been stated as ten throughout the centuries (the Decalogue), including the use of that number in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint or LXX). However, there have been differences among theologians in the numbering and ordering. In this study, we follow the numbering and ordering developed by Saint Augustine.

1. *I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3 You shall have no other gods before Me (vv. 2-3). You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments (vv. 4 – 6).*
   Some theologians have broken this section into two between verses 3 and 4, but such a split is immaterial because if a person makes an idol then they are also worshiping a different god. A definition of idolatry is the assigning of godlike power to anything or anyone other than God. Another way of thinking about idolatry is when we hold something or someone as more important than God. In Matthew 4:10, Jesus reaffirmed this teaching when He said: "YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY." As a corollary, Scripture is clear that people are to pray to God alone and to no one else. The Hebrews, to whom this commandment was given, were thoroughly immersed in a culture of idolatry. If you read further in Exodus you will see that after Moses went up on Mount Sinai to meet with God the people assumed he was dead and then commenced to build an idol of a golden calf (Exodus 31:1-6). It is important to recognize the forbidding of creating idols in verses 4 – 6. This teaching is clearly repeated in the New Testament. Paul warns the Corinthians about worshiping idols in 1 Corinthians 6:9, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor **idolaters**, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals" (shall enter the kingdom of heaven). He also did this in Galatians 5:19-20 saying, "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions." In our day, many religious societies such as Hinduism are built around the worship of idols representing false gods. The bottom line is not to worship a false god, whether it is in the shape of an idol or not. We need to be careful to place our focus on God, not on other things or people.
2. *You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain (v. 7).*
   This means that a person is not to use the Lord's name in an irreverent manner. Jesus said in the Lord's Prayer, "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name'" (Matthew 6:9). This admonition is repeated in Matthew 5:33-37.
3. *Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. 11 For in six days the*

LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy (vv. 9 – 11).
This commandment is not found in the New Testament, although there is a strong biblical **principle** in the Bible about observing one day of rest and focused worship unto the Lord. We will discuss in detail later in this study after we finish the listing of the Commandments.

4. *Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you (v. 12).*
This is the only commandment with a promise and is repeated in Ephesians 6:2, "HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise).
5. *You shall not murder (v. 13).* This is repeated in Matthew 5:21-22 "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell."
6. *You shall not commit adultery (v. 14).* Jesus affirmed this and expanded on it by saying: "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Mt 5:27-28). This is repeated in Hebrews 13:4, "Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge."
7. *You shall not steal (v. 15).* This is repeated in Ephesians 4:28, "He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need."
8. *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor (v. 16).* Simply stated, you are not to tell a lie. This principle is repeated in Revelation 22:8.
9. *You shall not covet your neighbor's house; (v. 17a).* For the NT teaching see below.
10. *you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor (v. 17b – ff).*
This principle is repeated in Hebrews 13:5, "Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge," and again in Colossians 3:5 in which it is called idolatry. "Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry." If we as Christians were honest we would agree that covetousness is present in our own lives.

Concerning the Sabbath, there is a biblical principle about setting aside one day a week to worship the Lord and rest from work following the examples of believers in the New Testament. Even in the wording of the original commandment, God provided the principle of a day of rest. "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day" (Exodus 20:11). Obviously, God isn't the One Who needs to rest, instead the seventh day was

created for humans because of their physiological and psychological needs. In addition to resting on one day of the week, both the Jews and the early Christians set apart this day of rest for worship. In the Book of Acts we see how Paul met on Sunday (the first day of the week) with the believers in Troas (Acts 20:7). In First Corinthians, Paul commended the people to take up a collection on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:2). It was on Sunday (the Lord's Day) that John received the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ in his glory in heaven (Revelation 1:10). The Bible teaches that this day of rest isn't obligatory to Christians. In Second 2 Timothy a list of some 18 sins is given, but not one of them is the breaking of the Sabbath (2 Timothy 3:1-4). Again in Galatians a list of 15 more are given (Galatians 5:19-21), and in Romans some twenty more are given (Romans 1:29-32), however none are the breaking of the Sabbath. But, before we run ourselves ragged by not resting, we must pay attention to what the author of Hebrews says: "and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near" (Heb 10:24-25). He commends believers who continued to make meeting together a priority, for some had stopped joining together with other believers on a weekly basis. It is clear from the New Testament teaching that the keeping of **a** "sabbath" day is a matter of principle, not a matter of law. When you set Sunday aside for rest and worship, or some other day of the week, you are following a solid biblical principle ordained by God.

Understanding the Commandments of God is of profound importance for Christians today for a variety of reasons. First, following God's Commandments provides us with God's protection for our lives. The law is a safety net, a framework through which God can bless us and protect us throughout our lives. There is something inherently destructive to us when we break the Commandments. While we live in God's grace we are free to continue to pursue the work that God has preordained for us (Ephesians 2:10). God gives these to us in His grace to show us what abundant and true living is all about. Second, one of God's purposes in giving the Ten Commandments was to show us that we couldn't obey His Laws and therefore, we need a Savior. Paul put it this way when he explained the role of the Law: "What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COVET'" (Romans 7:7). The demanding and exacting nature of the Law is to point out our flaws and to let us know that there is something inherently wrong with our moral compass. The inability we have as humans to live up to the Ten Commandments (especially defined by Jesus), was to point to our need of a beautiful Savior. Because Jesus kept the Law from the heart, He is able to provide us with a righteousness that surpasses the scribes and the Pharisees. His righteousness is applied to our account (2 Corinthians 5:21). We are set free from the consequences of breaking God's commands and do not reap the end result of spiritual death (Romans 6:23).

Following the Ten Commandments will not guarantee a person's entrance into heaven. Instead, they

point us to faith in Jesus Christ because they reveal how nobody can perfectly keep them. Paul said, "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). He also said about the entirety of the Jewish Law, "Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). We don't keep the commandments by trying harder. Instead, our obedience flows out of a heart that has been changed by God, what Jesus called being "born from above" (John 3:3) This mystery of the second birth comes about when a person comes to believe that they are a sinner and unable to earn their own forgiveness of sins before God. When they place their trust in the Lord Jesus as their substitute, their "Passover Lamb" slain for their sins (1 Corinthians 5:7), then they can begin to walk in true obedience of God. This is in contrast to following their natural human inclination to strive to try harder in their own strength.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

As we move onto the second reading from Saint Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, let us place ourselves in the proper context in the First Century Church. The context is the opening of the Letter that Paul wrote to address some specific concerns that he had about things happening in the Corinthian Church. Corinth was a city filled with idolatry, and as Paul ministered to the church there, he opened his First Letter to them with a high-level summary of the prevailing theological positions of the two main opposing forces to Christianity. The first group were the Jews who were thoroughly immersed in the Greek culture. Just as had happened during Jesus' ministry (as will see later in the Gospel reading), the Jews sought to be convinced by miraculous signs before they would believe in God. Then even when signs were given, they still did not believe. The second group were the Greeks who searched endlessly for wisdom and new things. For example Luke said in the Book of Acts, "Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new" (Acts 17:21). As you read the second Mass reading for today, notice how the unbelievers disregarded the truth of the Gospel message.

Second Reading:

1 Corinthians 1:22-25 NAS95 22 For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Paul shows in this passage how God's value system is upside down in contrast to these two opposing,

worldly ways of thinking. Paul stated how Christ is the "power of God" which contrasts with the Jewish idea of power being displayed through miraculous signs and victorious displays of political rulership. He also said that Christ is the "wisdom of God" appealing to the Greek's desire for wisdom in which wisdom was personified in the scholars of the golden era of Socrates and Plato. In our world, Jesus Christ can be an offensive term to those who do not know Him. We must decide whether we let the world intimidate us or whether we will continue to trust in His Name.

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

The Gospel lesson is from John Chapter 2 in which we see Jesus' cleansing of the temple during the Passover. The celebration was an important feast which commemorated the "passing over" of the death angel of the houses marked by the blood of the sacrificial lamb just before the Jews' Exodus from Egypt (Exodus 12). The Lord struck the firstborn of every family and animal in households throughout the land of Egypt that did not mark their doorpost with the blood of the lamb as God required. It is foundational for every Christian to understand the Passover feast because of the fact that Jesus is our sacrificial Lamb, the One whom we commemorate during the Easter season. Jesus is the "Lamb slain since before the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8). As you read, remember that Jesus' disciples did not yet understand these things about His upcoming death that atoned for the sins of the world.

Gospel Reading:

John 2:13-25 NAS95 13 The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. 15 And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; 16 and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business." 17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME." 18 The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?" 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" 21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body. 22 So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken. 23 Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. 24 But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, 25 and because

He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

In the reading, the Jews asked Jesus, "What sign do you show us as your authority for doing these things" (v. 18). This corresponds to what Paul said in 1 Corinthians that the Jews ask for a sign. Jesus in His grace provided them with a sign, but they still did not understand about the analogy between the destruction of the temple and Jesus' death and resurrection. It wasn't until after He resurrected that the disciples understood that Jesus had an authority beyond any earthly power.

Why did Jesus take such drastic measures to cleanse the temple during the preparation for Passover? The system that was supposed to point people towards worship had been corrupted into a crime syndicate in which the ruling Jewish powers sold sacrificial animals and exchanged currencies for outrageous profits. Very likely any sacrificial animal that was brought in by the people would have been deemed unworthy and would need to have been replaced by one provided by the syndicate for a very high price. The religious leaders were exploiting the people and abusing their power. This touched Jesus in a tender spot, for His passion was for God's glory. Clearly, God's glory was not the passion of those who were in charge of the religious system of that day. Instead, their self-serving passion echoed the indictment of the Old Testament prophets who vehemently opposed the exploitation of the "sheep" by the shepherds of Israel (Ezekiel 34). Once Jesus opposed this system, he in effect signed His death warrant. But Jesus did not cower to the corrupt religious leaders; instead He surrendered Himself to His heavenly Father. It is this ability to separate ourselves from the need for approval of others that Jesus now gives us. Jesus stood up for what is right so that we can now stand up for what is right in our age. May our passions be directed for God's glory.

Reflection Questions

1. In the first reading we studied an aspect of the Old Testament Law, which is God's standard for righteousness under His Theocratic Kingdom rule. His standards for righteousness have not changed, which would be daunting for us if we did not have Christ. The bad news is that "we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). The Good News is that Christ died for our sins so that when God looks at us He sees Christ's perfect righteousness. This is a gift that we receive when we "confess with [our] mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in [our] heart that God raised Him from the dead" (Romans 10:9a-b). Have you made this transaction in your heart with God?

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2. As you grow in your Christian walk, you might wonder what to do with your ongoing guilt that you have when you are disobedient. Nobody can perfectly keep the Ten Commandments or the other principles that are stated in the New Testament. Reflect on this cycle that all of us have experienced. You sin, then you feel guilty, then you promise to never sin again, then you try really hard not to sin, and then at some point, you commit that same sin again. Why would God not just make us perfect, once we give our heart to Him? Well, maybe it's because He wants us to live in dependence of Him (not independently of Him). Our pre-converted response to sin is to try harder. Our converted response to sin should be to run to our Savior. Guilt should lead you to a renewed place of surrender and dependence, convincing you of your ongoing need for a Savior. When you recognize throughout the weeks ahead that you have been disobedient to God's Command, let the guilty feelings remind you of Christ's sacrifice and provision of righteousness provided for you through faith in Him. You can take yourself down off the cross while remembering that Jesus placed Himself there for you. When you experience guilty feelings talk to Jesus about your ongoing need for His saving grace. Let your guilt and shame bring you back to a place of brokenness and dependence on Him.

List one thing with which you are struggling that you can turn to Jesus to carry for you this week.

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Sunday Mass Study Notes for Sunday 03-15-2020

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Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes. This week we begin with the Book of Exodus where we will see Moses follow God's instruction to bring water from a rock. Then we move to Romans Chapter 5 where we will discover Saint Paul's explanation of how Christians are justified by faith alone. Then we study an amazing encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well.

Introduction to the First Reading:

The first reading is from Exodus Chapter 17. The context of the passage was a few months after Moses guided the Hebrew nation out of Egypt where they had been subject to slavery for 400 years after Joseph's reign with the Pharaoh. God had provided them with manna some months earlier (Exodus 16:14). They had just left the Wilderness of Sin and had camped at a place called Rephidim after camping at other places along the way. This was right before the Amalekites attacked the defenseless Hebrews at that location (Exodus 17:8-16). We included the first two verses in order to add context for you while you read.

First Reading:

> *1 Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin, according to the command of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink. 2 Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water that we may drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" 3 But the people thirsted there for water; and they grumbled against Moses and said, "Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" 4 So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me." 5 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the*

> *Nile, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us, or not?" (Exodus 17:1-7)*

Moses said that the congregation of Israel journeyed "by stages," meaning that they made other stops along the way. Numbers Chapter 33 said that they made three stops between the Wilderness of Sin and Rephidim (Numbers 33:12-14) indicating that these in between campsites may have been less eventful than what happened here. Here Moses encountered serious opposition, to the point that he was concerned that if the conflict wasn't resolved the people would stone him (v.4c). It was so significant that Moses even named the place Massah and Meribah after the conflict (v.7), words which mean

"testing" and "contending." The people commanded Moses to give them water for them to drink along with their animals (vv. 2-3). The significant point is that rather than pray to God themselves to ask for water, the people "quarreled" with Moses, who was their obvious intercessor between them and God (v.2). Moses asked the question, "Why do you test the LORD?" (v. 2e). A clue to what the people meant by this can be found in verse 7: "He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, 'Is the LORD among us, or not?'" What happened was that they doubted that God was still watching over them to provide for them. This is amazing because God had just delivered them from the army of the Egyptians just a few months earlier, and was guiding them in their journeys through a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21)! How soon they forgot about God's divine deliverance of them from their slavery in Egypt, His supernatural parting of the Red Sea and His subsequent visible leadership on their journey!

As the story continued, Moses interceded in prayer on behalf of the people, something that he did very frequently as Moses was one of the most prayerful people in the Bible. Moses' prayer was something which shouldn't be taken for granted, as he evidently prayed so hard and so long for the people in the subsequent battle against the Amalekites that men had to hold his arms up (Exodus 17:12). God could have just provided water immediately upon Moses' request, but instead He answered Moses' prayer in a way that revealed Moses' authority as a leader of the people along with the elders.

The truth that emerges from the text is that everyone has access to God's miraculous provision through prayer without the need for an intercessor. Moses was their intercessor between them and God, and theologically was what is called a "type of Christ" meaning that he was a person that prefigured the Lord Jesus Christ. As believers in the risen Lord Jesus, we have direct access to God's

miraculous powers through prayer, and our Intercessor lives in our hearts through God the Holy Spirit. When we face difficult challenges in life, God calls us to turn to Him in prayer, as well as to ask others to pray on our behalf, as Moses did for the Hebrew Nation. The Hebrew people turned to Moses to pray for them instead of the God that they could see in the pillars. God calls us to turn to the God that we can't see. James said in the New Testament Book by his name, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (James 5:16). The Book of Hebrews says, "Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). The Apostle John in 1 John 5 said the following:

> *13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. 14 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. (1 John 5:13-15)*

We can rest in the fact that God receives our prayers *faster* than the speed of light. Although we don't always agree with the outcome or the timing of God's answer, we can have peace that God works on our behalf for our own good (Romans 8:28) regardless of our feelings.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

The second reading is from Chapter 5 in the Book of Romans. In the previous chapter, Paul explained the case that God justifies sinners on the basis of their faith in Jesus alone, and challenged the false notion in the Roman church that although believers receive salvation by grace alone they preserve it by their good works.

Read the text, noting that additional verses were added for context.

Second Reading:

> *1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. 6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:1-8)*

Paul started out by connecting this section of teaching with his previous teaching about justification by faith. "Therefore, having been justified by faith" (v. 1a). He said that believers have a new relationship with God, one of peace, through the Lord Jesus Christ. He went on to say that believers have hope in seeing the glory of God and that they can persevere during their trials because this produces godly character which in turn produces hope (vv. 3-4). Finally, Paul made an amazing statement about how Jesus died for us while we were still in our sinful state. He said, "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly" v.6). He continued, "***But God*** demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (v.8, emphasis added). Notice the phrase "But God." God's direct involvement in the affairs of our lives greatly reassures us of the reality of His love for us! God loved us so much that he gave his only begotten Son for us (John 3:16). He did this with the full awareness of the *future* sins that we would commit, yet He went through with a humiliating death on the cross for us anyway. As we approach Good Friday, think about the magnitude of Jesus' sacrifice for us. Moses left a heavenly palace in the court of the Pharaoh in order to deliver the Hebrew slaves from bondage, so that they might find rest in the Promised Land. Jesus left the realities of Heaven in order to deliver us from the bondage of our sin, so that we might find rest in His eternal home, our Promised Land. May we continue to appreciate and adore our Savior for what He did for us!

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

The Gospel reading covers a story of Jesus freeing a woman of the bondage of sin. While we may or may not be able to relate to her particular sin struggle (sexual immorality), we can all relate to the problem of looking for love in all the wrong places.

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> *5 So He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; 6 and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. 7 There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." 8 For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. 9 Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) 10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." 11 She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? 12 "You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?" 13 Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing*

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Some key observations from the text include:

- This story of misunderstandings shows that Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior of the world
- He shows Himself to those who are seeking to worship God in spirit and in truth (not just to the religious elite)

- While she is seeking validation and significance through temporal realities (water, wells, religious argumentation, human relationships), Jesus is wanting to open her heart up to eternal realities (living water that will truly satisfy her soul, a life that is regenerated and empowered by the Holy Spirit, a life that is not afraid of the truth).
- Jesus loves her enough to break through her misguided notions of where life comes from and helps her to see that He is the Messiah, the anointed Deliverer, to save people from their sins.
- As a result of her changed life, others see the reality of Jesus and believe in Him as their own Savior.

What about you? Are you thirsty?

It's easy to look with judgment on this poor Samaritan woman, who was looking for love in all the wrong places. She bumps into Jesus one day and gets a whole new lesson on her need for a Savior. But as Christians, we can grow cold to our need for a Savior. But, if we're honest, we have our own broken cisterns that don't satisfy our deep thirst:

- Finding approval from others
- Achieving goals and accomplishing things
- Perfectionism
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- Looking to others for our sense of identity and validation

It's easy to do what this woman did and argue about places and forms of worship, to punt to mystery, to look for love in all the wrong places.

What religious conundrums do you throw into Jesus' face when he is trying to deal with spiritual life issues? What strategies do you use to deflect the painful sense of thirst that gnaws at your soul?

He is patient and keeps pressing us to come out of hiding and be honest: to worship Him in Spirit and in truth. But what does it look like to drink this living water, to become true worshipers?

It looks like a relationship with Jesus. Do you have this? Are you pursuing Him? Are you letting Him love you, speak to you, fill you and change you?

Reflection Questions

1. One of the common themes for this week's reading has to do with being delivered from the bondage of sin. In what ways does sin feel like slavery or bondage? How does Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well reassure you that he is powerful enough to free you from the bondage and penalty of sin? How would you respond if He offered you living water?
2. How are you like the Hebrew people? Re-read the 1 Cor. 11 passage and take a personal inventory. How can this story be instructive to you in your life? Ask yourself who in your circle of believing friends and relatives prays for you on a regular basis. Ask yourself for whom you

have been praying recently.

Second, reach out to one other believer this week with a specific prayer request and ask them to pray regarding this one specific issue throughout the week. Finally, ask the person with whom you communicated how you may pray for them in one specific way this week.

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Sunday Mass Study Notes for Sunday, 03-24-2019



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes. This week we begin with the Book of Exodus where we will see Moses follow God's instruction to bring water from a rock. Then we move to Romans Chapter 5 where we will discover Saint Paul's explanation of how Christians are justified by faith alone. Then we study an amazing encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well.

Introduction to the First Reading:

The first reading is from Exodus Chapter 17. The context of the passage was a few months after

Moses guided the Hebrew nation out of Egypt where they had been subject to slavery for 400 years after Joseph's reign with the Pharaoh. God had provided them with manna some months earlier (Exodus 16:14). They had just left the Wilderness of Sin and had camped at a place called Rephidim after camping at other places along the way. This was right before the Amalekites attacked the defenseless Hebrews at that location (Exodus 17:8-16). We included the first two verses in order to add context for you while you read.

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> *1 Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin, according to the command of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink. 2 Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water that we may drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" 3 But the people thirsted there for water; and they grumbled against Moses and said, "Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" 4 So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me." 5 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us, or not?" (Exodus 17:1-7)*

Moses said that the congregation of Israel journeyed "by stages," meaning that they made other stops along the way. Numbers Chapter 33 said that they made three stops between the Wilderness of Sin and Rephidim (Numbers 33:12-14) indicating that these in between campsites may have been less eventful than what happened here. Here Moses encountered serious opposition, to the point that he was concerned that if the conflict wasn't resolved the people would stone him (v.4c). It was so significant that Moses even named the place Massah and Meribah after the conflict (v.7), words which mean

"testing" and "contending." The people commanded Moses to give them water for them to drink along with their animals (vv. 2-3). The significant point is that rather than pray to God themselves to ask for water, the people "quarreled" with Moses, who was their obvious intercessor between them and God (v.2). Moses asked the question, "Why do you test the LORD?" (v. 2e). A clue to what the people meant by this can be found in verse 7: "He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, 'Is the LORD among us, or not?'" What happened was that they doubted that God was still watching over them to provide for

them. This is amazing because God had just delivered them from the army of the Egyptians just a few months earlier, and was guiding them in their journeys through a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21)! How soon they forgot about God's divine deliverance of them from their slavery in Egypt, His supernatural parting of the Red Sea and His subsequent visible leadership on their journey!

As the story continued, Moses interceded in prayer on behalf of the people, something that he did very frequently as Moses was one of the most prayerful people in the Bible. Moses' prayer was something which shouldn't be taken for granted, as he evidently prayed so hard and so long for the people in the subsequent battle against the Amelekites that men had to hold his arms up (Exodus 17:12). God could have just provided water immediately upon Moses' request, but instead He answered Moses' prayer in a way that revealed Moses' authority as a leader of the people along with the elders.

The truth that emerges from the text is that everyone has access to God's miraculous provision through prayer without the need for an intercessor. Moses was their intercessor between them and God, and theologically was what is called a "type of Christ" meaning that he was a person that prefigured the Lord Jesus Christ. As believers in the risen Lord Jesus, we have direct access to God's miraculous powers through prayer, and our Intercessor lives in our hearts through God the Holy Spirit. When we face difficult challenges in life, God calls us to turn to Him in prayer, as well as to ask others to pray on our behalf, as Moses did for the Hebrew Nation. The Hebrew people turned to Moses to pray for them instead of the God that they could see in the pillars. God calls us to turn to the God that we can't see. James said in the New Testament Book by his name, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (James 5:16). The Book of Hebrews says, "Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). The Apostle John in 1 John 5 said the following:

> *13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. 14 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. (1 John 5:13-15)*

We can rest in the fact that God receives our prayers *faster* than the speed of light. Although we don't always agree with the outcome or the timing of God's answer, we can have peace that God works on our behalf for our own good (Romans 8:28) regardless of our feelings.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

The second reading is from Chapter 5 in the Book of Romans. In the previous chapter, Paul explained the case that God justifies sinners on the basis of their faith in Jesus alone, and challenged the false notion in the Roman church that although believers receive salvation by grace alone they

preserve it by their good works.

Read the text, noting that additional verses were added for context.

Second Reading:

> *1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. 6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:1-8)*

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We can rest in the fact that God receives our prayers *faster* than the speed of light. Although we don't always agree with the outcome or the timing of God's answer, we can have peace that God works on our behalf for our own good (Romans 8:28) regardless of our feelings.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

The second reading is from Chapter 5 in the Book of Romans. In the previous chapter, Paul explained the case that God justifies sinners on the basis of their faith in Jesus alone, and challenged the false notion in the Roman church that although believers receive salvation by grace alone they preserve it by their good works.

Read the text, noting that additional verses were added for context.

Second Reading:

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. 6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:1-8)

Paul started out by connecting this section of teaching with his previous teaching about justification by faith. "Therefore, having been justified by faith" (v. 1a). He said that believers have a new relationship with God, one of peace, through the Lord Jesus Christ. He went on to say that believers have hope in seeing the glory of God and that they can persevere during their trials because this produces godly character which in turn produces hope (vv. 3-4). Finally, Paul made an amazing statement about how Jesus died for us while we were still in our sinful state. He said, "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly" v.6). He continued, "***But God*** demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (v.8, emphasis added). Notice the phrase "But God." God's direct involvement in the affairs of our lives

greatly reassures us of the reality of His love for us! God loved us so much that he gave his only begotten Son for us (John 3:16). He did this with the full awareness of the *future* sins that we would commit, yet He went through with a humiliating death on the cross for us anyway. As we approach Good Friday, think about the magnitude of Jesus' sacrifice for us. Moses left a heavenly palace in the court of the Pharaoh in order to deliver the Hebrew slaves from bondage, so that they might find rest in the Promised Land. Jesus left the realities of Heaven in order to deliver us from the bondage of our sin, so that we might find rest in His eternal home, our Promised Land. May we continue to appreciate and adore our Savior for what He did for us!

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

The Gospel reading covers a story of Jesus freeing a woman of the bondage of sin. While we may or may not be able to relate to her particular sin struggle (sexual immorality), we can all relate to the problem of looking for love in all the wrong places.

Gospel Reading:

5 So He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; 6 and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. 7 There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." 8 For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. 9 Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) 10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." 11 She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? 12 "You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?" 13 Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." 15 The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw." 16 He said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here." 17 The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband'; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly." 19 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." 25 The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us." 26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He." 27 At this point His disciples came, and they

were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman, yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why do You speak with her?" 28 So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city and said to the men, 29 "Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?" 30 They went out of the city, and were coming to Him. 31 Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." 32 But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." 33 So the disciples were saying to one another, "No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?" 34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work. 35 "Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. 36 Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. 37 For in this case the saying is true, 'One sows and another reaps.' 38 I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor." 39 From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all the things that I have done." 40 So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. 41 Many more believed because of His word; 42 and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world." (John 4:5-42)

Some key observations from the text include:

- This story of misunderstandings shows that Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior of the world
- He shows Himself to those who are seeking to worship God in spirit and in truth (not just to the religious elite)
- While she is seeking validation and significance through temporal realities (water, wells, religious argumentation, human relationships), Jesus is wanting to open her heart up to eternal realities (living water that will truly satisfy her soul, a life that is regenerated and empowered by the Holy Spirit, a life that is not afraid of the truth).
- Jesus loves her enough to break through her misguided notions of where life comes from and helps her to see that He is the Messiah, the anointed Deliverer, to save people from their sins.
- As a result of her changed life, others see the reality of Jesus and believe in Him as their own Savior.

What about you? Are you thirsty?

It's easy to look with judgment on this poor Samaritan woman, who was looking for love in all the wrong places. She bumps into Jesus one day and gets a whole new lesson on her need for a Savior. But as Christians, we can grow cold to our need for a Savior. But, if we're honest, we have our own broken cisterns that don't satisfy our deep thirst:

- Finding approval from others
- Achieving goals and accomplishing things
- Perfectionism

- Religiosity
- Looking to others for our sense of identity and validation

It's easy to do what this woman did and argue about places and forms of worship, to punt to mystery, to look for love in all the wrong places.

What religious conundrums do you throw into Jesus' face when he is trying to deal with spiritual life issues? What strategies do you use to deflect the painful sense of thirst that gnaws at your soul?

He is patient and keeps pressing us to come out of hiding and be honest: to worship Him in Spirit and in truth. But what does it look like to drink this living water, to become true worshipers?

It looks like a relationship with Jesus. Do you have this? Are you pursuing Him? Are you letting Him love you, speak to you, fill you and change you?

Reflection Questions

1. One of the common themes for this week's reading has to do with being delivered from the bondage of sin. In what ways does sin feel like slavery or bondage? How does Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well reassure you that he is powerful enough to free you from the bondage and penalty of sin? How would you respond if He offered you living water?

2. How are you like the Hebrew people? Re-read the 1 Cor. 11 passage and take a personal inventory. How can this story be instructive to you in your life? Ask yourself who in your circle of believing friends and relatives prays for you on a regular basis. Ask yourself for whom you have been praying recently.

Second, reach out to one other believer this week with a specific prayer request and ask them to pray regarding this one specific issue throughout the week. Finally, ask the person with whom you communicated how you may pray for them in one specific way this week.

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