

## **Bible Challenge March 19 (the Feast of Saint Joseph) – March 25, 2017**

Advent's weekly Bible Challenge is based upon the readings assigned for each Sunday. The Basic challenge is to re-read the texts that were read on Sunday morning and included in the Sunday bulletin. The Adventure and Explorer challenges are suggestions of different ways to deepen your knowledge of the Bible. The challenge is organized as one reading for each of five days, but find a pace or style that fits your schedule.

### **INTRODUCTION**

*In today's gospel the Samaritan woman asks Jesus for water, an image of our thirst for God. Jesus offers living water, a sign of God's grace flowing from the waters of baptism. The early church used this gospel and those of the next two Sundays to deepen baptismal reflection during the final days of preparation before baptism at Easter. As we journey to the resurrection feast, Christ comes among us in word, bath, and meal—offering us the life-giving water of God's mercy and forgiveness.*

### **DAY ONE: 2 Samuel 7:4, 8-16**

The word of the Lord came to Nathan: <sup>8</sup>say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; <sup>9</sup>and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. <sup>10</sup>And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, <sup>11</sup>from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. <sup>12</sup>When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>13</sup>He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. <sup>14</sup>I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings. <sup>15</sup>But I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. <sup>16</sup>Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

**Adventure Challenge:** 2 Samuel 7.

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A:* Research Nathan.

*Option B:* To learn the background to the comment about Saul in verse 15, read 1 Samuel 13:13-14 and 15:26-28.

*Option C:* This passage uses two different meanings for *house*: 1) a structure where someone resides, presumably secure and content; 2) a dynasty, as in the phrase “the house of David,” where customs and traditions are honored. Identify where different meanings are used and when *house* might mean both ideas.

### **DAY TWO: Psalm 95**

*Let us enter God's presence singing praises for all God has created; let us listen carefully to God's voice.*

<sup>1</sup>Come, let us sing to the LORD;

let us shout for joy to the rock of our salvation.

<sup>2</sup>Let us come before God's presence with thanksgiving

and raise a loud shout to the LORD with psalms.

<sup>3</sup>For you, LORD, are a great God,

and a great ruler above all gods.

<sup>4</sup>In your hand are the caverns of the earth;

the heights of the hills are also yours.

<sup>5</sup>The sea is yours, for you made it,

and your hands have molded the dry land.

<sup>6</sup>Come, let us worship and bow down,

let us kneel before the LORD our maker.

<sup>7</sup>For the LORD is our God, and we are the people of God's pasture and the sheep of God's hand.

Oh, that today you would hear God's voice!

<sup>8</sup>"Harden not your hearts,

as at Meribah, as on that day at Massah in the desert.

<sup>9</sup>There your ancestors tested me,

they put me to the test, though they had seen my works.

<sup>10</sup>Forty years I loathed that generation, saying,

'The heart of this people goes astray; they do not know my ways.'

<sup>11</sup>Indeed I swore in my anger,

'They shall never come to my rest.'"

**Adventure Challenge:** Psalm 95. (Option: Compare Psalms 95 and 96.)

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A:* Research *Meribah* and *Massah*. (Read Exodus 17:1-17 and Numbers 20:1-13.)

*Option B:* Read Hebrews 3-4, a homiletic elaboration on Psalm 95:7-11.

### **DAY THREE: Romans 5:1-11**

*Though we often hear that God helps those who help themselves, here Paul tells us that through Jesus' death God helps utterly helpless sinners. Since we who had been enemies are reconciled to God in the cross, we now live in hope for our final salvation.*

<sup>1</sup>Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup>through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. <sup>3</sup>And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup>and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup>and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. <sup>6</sup>For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup>Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. <sup>8</sup>But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup>Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. <sup>10</sup>For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. <sup>11</sup>But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

**Adventure Challenge:** Romans 5.

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A:* Compare the attitude toward boasting in this passage (verses 2 and 11) to how it is presented in Romans 2:17 and 3:27.

*Option B.* Research possible meanings for the phrase *our hope of sharing the glory of God*.

### **DAY FOUR: John 4:5-42**

*Jesus defies convention to engage a Samaritan woman in conversation. Her testimony, in turn, leads many others to faith.*

<sup>5</sup>[Jesus] came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup>Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. <sup>7</sup>A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." <sup>8</sup>(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) <sup>9</sup>The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." <sup>11</sup>The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?" <sup>12</sup>Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with

his sons and his flocks drank from it?" <sup>13</sup>Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup>but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." <sup>15</sup>The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." <sup>16</sup>Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." <sup>17</sup>The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; <sup>18</sup>for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" <sup>19</sup>The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup>Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup>You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup>But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. <sup>24</sup>God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." <sup>25</sup>The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." <sup>26</sup>Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you." <sup>27</sup>Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" <sup>28</sup>Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, <sup>29</sup>Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he? <sup>30</sup>They left the city and were on their way to him. <sup>31</sup>Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." <sup>32</sup>But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." <sup>33</sup>So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?" <sup>34</sup>Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. <sup>35</sup>Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. <sup>36</sup>The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. <sup>37</sup>For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' <sup>38</sup>I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor." <sup>39</sup>Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." <sup>40</sup>So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup>And many more believed because of his word. <sup>42</sup>They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."

**Adventure Challenge:** John 4.

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A.* Research *Samaria* and *Samaritan* to learn the background and importance of the mutual distrust and dislike of Jews and Samaritans.

*Option B.* Research *living water*, including John 7:37-38.

## DAY FIVE:

### PRAYERS OF THE DAY

O God, from the family of your servant David you raised up Joseph to be the guardian of your incarnate Son and the husband of his blessed mother. Give up grace to imitate his uprightness of life and his obedience to your commands, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Merciful God, the fountain of living water, you quench our thirst and wash away our sin. Give us this water always. Bring us to drink from the well that flows with the beauty of your truth through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Lord, you are truly the Savior of the world; give me this living water that I may never thirst again. (*John 4:42, 15*)

**Adventure Challenge:** We are used to running (living) water available everywhere. Imagine the impact

of Jesus' words-- *those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty* -- to a woman who probably daily had to carry in large jugs all the water she and her family used for drinking, cooking, bathing, etc.

**Explorer Challenge:** March 19 is The Feast of Saint Joseph; research what we know about the husband of Mary and about this Feast, especially how it is traditionally celebrated in New Orleans.