



First Presbyterian Church Portsmouth, Ohio

The Rev. Lisa R. Eye, Pastor
Elder Diane Boster, Liturgist
Ms. Michele Imes, Director of Music
Dr. Phillip Roberts, Organist/Musician

The wilderness can be a place of isolation, but also a place of connection. Reflecting on today's gospel reading about Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman at the well, Jan Richardson writes, "I am struck anew by the woman's isolation: she has arrived at a time when none of the other townspeople would be there. I am struck also by how present Jesus is to this singular woman—how he sees and engages (and is engaged by) her in a way that she has never experienced before." Her reflection inspired this blessing from her book Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons:

Blessing of the Well

*If you stand at the edge of this blessing and call down into it,
you will hear your words return to you.
If you lean in and listen close,
you will hear this blessing give the story of your life back to you.
Quiet your voice.
Quiet your judgement.
Quiet the way you always tell your story to yourself.
Quiet all these and you will hear the whole of it and the hollows of it:
the spaces in the telling,
the gaps where you hesitate to go.
Sit at the rim of this blessing.
Press your ear to its lip, its sides,
its curves that were carved out long ago by those whose thirst drove the deep,
those who dug into the layers with only their hands and hope.
Rest yourself beside this blessing
and you will hear the sound of water entering the gaps.
Still yourself and you will feel it rising up within you,
filling every emptiness, springing forth anew.*

GATHERING THE COMMUNITY AROUND THE WORD

<i>Welcoming the Community</i>		Elder Diane Boster
<i>Announcements & Celebrations</i>		Elder Boster
<i>Prelude</i>		Dr. Phillip Roberts
<i>*Call to Worship</i>		Elder Boster
Jesus met the blind man at the city gate. Jesus met the crowds at the edge of the sea. Jesus met the leper in his pain. Jesus met the Samaritan woman in her isolation. So with confidence we declare— Jesus meets us here. For we too are the blind and the broken, the hurting and the bleeding. Jesus meets our scars, our fears, our prayers, and our dreams. So you are welcome here. All are welcome here. Let us worship God.		
<i>*Prayer of the Day</i>		Elder Boster
<i>*Hymn #474</i>	<i>Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing</i>	GTG
<i>*Call to Confession</i>		Elder Boster
<i>*Prayer of Confession (unison)</i>		
Lord, you know who we are. You know everything we have done. We thirst for things that will never satisfy. We commit ourselves to things that will never last. We worship things that will never bring salvation. Still, you offer us the gift of living water. Still, you offer us the gift of eternal life. Forgive us, gracious God, for not trusting your gifts, and seeking our own way. Give us this living water, so that we may never thirst again. Amen. <i>(silent confession)</i>		
<i>*Declaration of Forgiveness from Romans 5:8-10</i>		Rev. Eye
This is the good news of God's grace: Though we were sinners, Christ died for us. Though we were enemies of God, God loved us. Once we were lost and dead— Now Christ has become our life and salvation. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!		
<i>*Response #581</i>	<i>Glory Be to the Father</i>	GTG
<i>*Sharing the Peace</i>		Rev. Eye
The Peace of Christ be with you all. And also with you.		

HEARING & PROCLAIMING THE WORD

Prayer for Understanding

Rev. Eye

Scripture

Exodus 17:1-7

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Scripture

John 4:5-42

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon

The Wilderness: A Place of Isolation, A Place of Connection

The Rev. Lisa R. Eye

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

**Hymn (see p. 5 of the bulletin)* *Why Stands the Woman By the Well?*

**Affirmation of Faith (unison)*

We believe in a wilderness God—

**Who breathed life into dust,
turned seeds into flowers,
and flooded the sky with stars.**

We believe in a wilderness God—

**Who went hungry in the desert,
walked barefoot on the water,
and taught from the mountainside.**

We believe in a wilderness God—

**Whose love could be described
as nothing short of wild.**

So with confidence and hope,

**we long to follow our wilderness God
who walks with people on their darkest nights,
who sings hope into places of grief, isolation, and suffering,
and who exists in the form of untamed joy,
relentless love, and impossible hope.**

Step by step, may it be so. Amen.

Prayers of the People & The Lord's Prayer

Rev. Eye

...Receive all our prayers, spoken and unspoken, as together we pray as Jesus taught his disciples to pray, saying, **Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

Invitation to the Offering

Elder Boster

Offering Instrumental

Dr. Roberts

*Doxology #606

Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow

GTG

*Thanksgiving & Dedication (unison)

Elder Boster

Eternal God, source of healing and wholeness, bless these gifts, that they may be Christ's promise of living water for the world. May all who are touched by our gifts and the offering of our lives be bathed in the goodness of God's life, grace, and hope. Amen.

CALL TO MISSION

*Hymn #65

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

GTG

*Congregational Charge & Benediction

Rev. Eye

*Sending Song #543

God, Be the Love to Search and Keep Me, verse 1

GTG

***God, be the love to search and keep me;
God be the prayer to move my voice;
God be the strength to now uphold me.
O Christ, surround me; O Christ, surround me.***

Acolyte Recessional

Postlude

(Please be seated for the postlude.)

Dr. Roberts

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We are glad you are here and want you to feel welcome as you share in worship!

*The asterisk indicates that worshippers are invited to rise in body or in spirit, as able.

Bold text indicates that the congregation is invited to speak.

GTG refers to ***Glory to God***, the hymnal of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

We extend Christian sympathy to the family of Marilyn Warner

who died on February 21, 2016.

*If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord;
so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. Rom. 14:13*

**THE PRAYER LIST IS POSTED ON THE BULLETIN BOARD
IN THE EDUCATION ANNEX**

Let us pray for our ability to be faithful disciples, family, and friends; our church, pastor, the session, deacons, committees, lay leadership, our ministry, outreach, and stewardship; the Boney Fiddle community and its churches, schools, the city of Portsmouth and its leadership, state and national leadership, and those who are incarcerated.

Why Stands the Woman by the Well?

A Hymn Inspired by John 4:5-42

Text: Stephen M. Fearing, 2020

Tune: NOEL

Meter: CMD (8.6.8.6.D)

Music: English Melody; arr. Arthur S. Sullivan, 1874

Piano

1. Why stands the wo - man by the well in mid - day's bla - zing sun
2. She's had five hus - bands, not by choice, for reas - ons we don't know.
3. But by the well there was a man she did not re - cog - nize.
4. To Ja - cob's Well she came that day to quench her heav - y thirst.

Pno.

4

when oth - er wo - men gath - er wat - er when the day's be - gun?
Per - haps she strugg - led to con - cieve, then each man made her go.
He spoke to her with gent - le grace, with kind - ness in his eyes.
Of all the folks who called him Christ, this wo - man was the first.

Pno.

8

She's heard the whisp - ers and the taunts they hurl at her in jest.
But visc - ious rum - ors spread so fast, like weeds that feed on shame.
He showed his true di - vin - i - ty; she knew he was God's son.
She found in him e - ter - nal life, a wel - come warm and wide.

Pno.

12

And though her plight is not her fault, they judge her with - out rest.
At noon she head - ed to the well with pri - va - cy her aim.
She left her wa - ter jar be - hind and shared with ev - 'ry - one.
The love of God can do so much to nar - row the di - vide!

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Presbyterians have participated in the One Great Hour of Sharing since it began in 1949 following World War II, when leaders of several denominations made appeals for relief and reconstruction in areas devastated by the war. Today, OGHS is the largest of the three church-wide special offerings in the PC(U.S.A.). As we celebrate the season of Lent, Presbyterians respond to Christ's call to ministries of compassion for the most vulnerable around the world who suffer due to disaster, hunger, poverty, climate change, and

immigration/migration. The offering provides us a way to share God's love with our neighbors in need by providing them with safety, sustenance and hope. The offering will be received on Easter Sunday. You can find "fish" coin boxes to collect your gifts, offering envelopes, and more information about how the gifts will be used on the table in the hallway. Thank you for prayerfully considering how we can *do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God.*

Church & Community Calendar for March

Sunday Worship at 11:00 a.m. and all other scheduled meetings are held in the Church Lounge during the Sanctuary Restoration

Wednesday, February 25 (and following Wednesdays through March 25): Lenten Supper & Bible Study at 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday, March 11: Regular Session Meeting at 12:00 noon

Thursday, March 12: Armbrust Student Loan Committee Zoom meeting at 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, March 22: Regular Deacons Meeting following worship

Sunday, March 29: Palm/Passion Sunday

Looking Ahead

Thursday, April 2: Maundy Thursday Worship with Second Presbyterian Church at 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, April 5: Easter Day/Resurrection of the Lord

Church Contact Information

Church Office Hours: Tuesday-Thursday, 10:00 am-4:00 pm

Virginia M. Stinnett, Admin. Aid/Church Secretary—Email: vstinnett.fpcport@gmail.com; Phone: (740) 353-4259

Bev Phipps, Treasurer—Email: bevphipps1stpres@gmail.com; Phone: (740) 353-4259

Rev. Lisa R. Eye, Pastor—Email: leyefirstpresportsmouth@gmail.com; Pastor's Study: (740) 529-7177

Rev. Eye ordinarily works from her home study on Mondays and observes Fridays as sabbath time.

In case of pastoral emergency, she may be reached at (859) 329-9026.



First Presbyterian Church

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Wilder + ness "state of the wild"

Lent begins in the wilderness. The Spirit guides Jesus into the wilderness where he comes face to face with temptation and struggle. Yet, in his forty days of fasting, resisting, and wandering, Jesus is shaped and formed for ministry. Similarly, through the wilderness of Lent, we are invited to surrender to the wild leadings of the Spirit. We rarely enter the wilderness willingly, but hopefully through our wandering we remember who we are and whose we are. The wilderness can become sacred even if it remains dangerous. There is no wilderness space too harsh or threatening for God's love. Welcome to the wilderness journey.

3rd SUNDAY in LENT March 8, 2026

In today's texts the Israelites experience crisis in the wilderness. They experience the full spectrum of emotions the wilderness incites—doubt and disillusionment, disorientation and disconnection. Memories of their liberation from Egypt fade as their thirst deepens and they ask, "Is the Lord among us or not?" In John's gospel, Jesus greets a woman of Samaria—a foreign land he chooses to travel through, not around—and transforms her personal wilderness into living waters.

Exodus 17:1-7 (NRSV) *The Israelites thirst in the wilderness*

17 From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ² The people quarreled with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." 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 the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" ⁴ So Moses cried out to the Lord, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." ⁵ The Lord said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶ I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷ He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

John 4:5-42 (NRSV) *The Samaritan woman at the well*

⁵ So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

⁷ A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸ (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹ 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.) ¹⁰ 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." ¹¹ The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?" ¹² Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from

it?" ¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ 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." ¹⁵ 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."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." ¹⁷ The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" ¹⁹ The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." ²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ 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. 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" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." ²⁶ Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

²⁷ 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?" ²⁸ Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, ²⁹ "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" ³⁰ They left the city and were on their way to him.

³¹ Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." ³² But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." ³³ So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to

eat?”³⁴ Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work.”³⁵ 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.³⁶ The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.³⁷ For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”

THROUGH SAMARIA

by Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by John 4:5-42 | Graphic Image

Artist Statement: A wilderness exists between them. Samaria (currently known as part of the West Bank) was a region between Judea and Galilee, a place most Jews journeyed around, not through. Long-standing religious animosity existed between Jews and Samaritans. By cultural standards, a woman was not to encounter a man alone, and it was considered indecent for a man to speak to a woman in public places.

A wilderness of isolation and shame exists within the woman. She has had too many husbands, but not by choice. She’s been labeled infertile, and in turn, been divorced and passed around from man to man. She’s been widowed, grieving men who have died from sickness and from war. She’s had to sell her body to survive. She’s been shunned and shamed by other women. She’s been objectified and sexualized since she was a child. She’s still a child, but she’s lived a hundred lives. She is one woman, but she holds within herself the pain and secrets of thousands of women throughout time and space.

And in this wilderness terrain—a space where she is both vulnerable and alone, where she blends in but also longs to be seen—she is sought out, welcomed, known. That’s all she needs, really—to be seen. Really seen and truly known.

A wilderness exists between them, and yet the wilderness brings them together. The wilderness becomes a place to begin again. She leaves her jar behind, filled instead with a new story to share.

³⁹ Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.”⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days.⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word.⁴² 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.”



Wilderness

*...can be a place of surprising connection
...is a place to be vulnerable and seen
...is a place to tell the truth
...is a place where we seek God’s provision
...is a place to meet God.*