

Brought to you by [ConcordiaTheology.org](http://ConcordiaTheology.org), bringing you resources that support the vigorous life of the mind in service of the gospel of Christ.

- Jessica: Welcome to Lectionary Kick-start.  
We're sparking your thoughts for Sunday as you plan your sermon or teaching lesson.  
I'm your host and producer Jessica Bordeleau, here with Dr. David Schmitt and Dr. Peter Nafzger.  
They're both professors of homiletics here at Concordia Seminary St. Louis.  
You can hear all about us in our introductory episode, but trust me, they are really good preachers.  
Okay, let's get started, guys.  
Peter, where are we in the church here?
- Peter: We're at the third Sunday in Lent.
- Jessica: And David, what are the texts this week?
- David: Exodus 17, Romans 5, John 4, and Psalm 95.
- Jessica: As always, I ask each of you to tell me which text you would choose to preach about to determine who goes first.  
In today's reading, we hear about how the Israelites were in the wilderness.  
They didn't have anything to drink.  
And God provided, through a miracle, water in the desert.  
But now we just carry water around with us, right?  
I want you to describe your water bottle.
- David: Well, my niece gave me a brand new water bottle for Christmas because she said I was old.  
And she wanted to make me cool.  
So I've got some water bottle that's got like a straw in it.  
It's weird, but I like it.  
A wallah or something like that.
- Jessica: And Peter, what kind of water bottle do you have?
- Peter: I don't have one single one.  
We have a number of Nalgene's.  
They're good for camping and hiking, that kind of stuff.  
And so we get Nalgene water bottles, and then we get stickers from the various places we go and hike and camp.  
And so we tend to have a bottle with themed stickers.  
So we've got a desert bottle.  
We've got a northern Minnesota bottle.  
We've got other things.  
So one of my Nalgene's is usually hanging around somewhere.
- Jessica: And you share them?  
Like your family is like, oh, I'll have the desert one today.

Or are they yours?

Peter: No, they're kind of our families.  
So each kid has one they really like, but I take whichever  
one's been cleaned within any sort of days of time.

Jessica: So the one that I have here, it is a Contigo blue see-through, and it has the  
pop-up straw.

Peter: Oh, how about that?

Jessica: I've lost so many of them.  
So let's see, who do I pick?  
I have to go with David since no one shares your water bottle.

David: Okay, well, I am going to preach on the gospel  
reading, the Samaritan woman at the well.  
I love the idea that there's this woman that Jesus is reaching out to while his  
disciples just go into the town to pick up some food.

Peter: That's my favorite part, how dense the disciples are.

David: I know, right.

Jessica: They're just hungry.  
That seems totally practical to me.

David: And then, you know, she's not just alone.  
She's part of a community.  
The community then comes.  
The disciples are like, what's going on?  
There's this imagery of water and life.  
It's just a beautiful, beautiful text.

Jessica: I like her because she left her water jar behind, and  
I lose my water bottle all the time, all the time.  
So I feel like perhaps the patron saint of people who lose their water bottles.

David: Oh, there you go.  
That's right.  
Okay.  
So with this text, there's preconceptions about the woman.  
And the one thing we know for sure is that our  
Lord intervenes in her life in a gracious way.  
Is she a woman who has a sexual life that has made her sinful, and therefore she's  
shunned by everybody, and Jesus comes and redeems  
perhaps an adulterous woman or something like that?  
Is that one way of picturing her?

Peter: Sure.

Well, and there's the notions of promiscuity that are modern.

David: They're modern, right.

Peter: It's so easy to read that back into a very different place and time where women had absolutely no social standing.

David: And that's what I think is... that's what I think.  
I think she is a woman who has sinned against more than sinning.  
That we know that divorce laws were supposedly very easy, that a man could divorce his wife for burning his dinner or something like that.

Jessica: And then she'd just be stuck?

David: Right.  
Well, now she's marked as one who's been divorced, and she's had five husbands, right?  
And so I could see her being used by man after man after man.  
And then the guy she's now with is not her husband.  
And my reading of that would be because he's not going to honor her with a certificate of marriage.  
And that's the beauty of this whole encounter with Jesus is she finally encounters a man who is not going to use her, who is not going to cast her aside.  
She encounters a man who is going to love her and give her the dignity of being a child of God.  
And that, to me, is what's so beautiful about the passage.

Peter: Well, and even, you know, what got her there aside, she's there by herself.  
And she's alone.  
And, and Jesus comes to her, like you mentioned at the very start, he comes to her graciously.

David: Right.

Peter: And honestly, but kindly and gently.  
And that's, that is seemingly uncommon for her in her life at least.

David: Right.  
Yeah.

Jessica: How encouraging for women sitting in the pew.  
I'm sure very few of them have been caught in human trafficking as if she was a prostitute, but plenty of them have been treated poorly by men.

David: Right.

Jessica: And so for them to hear you describe her in that way, and then for Jesus to talk to her, that might be very comforting to women in the pew.

David: Right.

And so, I mean, we have to, we have to have a light touch because we're filling in gaps, but we do know that she is a woman in need.

And we do know that Jesus' first words to her, aside from give me a drink, but his first words to her are, are words that are desirous of her knowing him as a gift from God.

Jessica, if you could read verse 10.

Jessica: 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.

David: I love that.

If you knew the gift of God.

And Jesus is the gift of God.

If you knew me as a gift from God to you, right?

And you knew who I am, you would ask me for water.

And so, Jesus is willing to, he's desirous of her knowing him, he's desirous of giving her living water, and kind of that whole conversation.

I love the beauty of it, is that he's picking up on something she's doing.

She's getting water from a well.

And Jesus is using that as the imagery for, you know, the gospel proclamation in this.

And, you know, if she had been doing something else, if she had been,

you know, I don't know, treading grapes or, you know, threshing grain,

I'm sure he would have used that as an image, that Jesus enters into her life situation, and he uses the things that she knows about to

invite her to experience something that she doesn't know about.

And that is love.

Jessica, could you read verse 39?

Jessica: Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony. He told me all that I'd ever did.

David: I love that.

Here she tried to get Jesus into a argument, a discussion about worship.

But the thing that stuck with her was that he told her everything she ever did, that he knew her, that he truly knew her and loved her.

And that's what mattered.

And so when she goes into the town, what she says to the Samaritans is, come see a man.

I mean, that come and see.

We've already heard that with Nathaniel, right?

Come and see.

And, you know, she's like, come and see a man who explained to me where we're supposed to worship?

A man who taught me about the Spirit in worship?

No.

Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did.

And I would want to add, and still love me anyway.

Right?

I mean, still love me.

And so there's this beautiful encounter here that just makes me think about the way in which God works in our lives, in a congregation and our lives out in the community, is that God loves us in a deeply personal way.

He knows everything we have ever done.

He provides forgiveness for every sin, defense for every temptation.

And knowing that gives us something to share with other people.

Come meet a God who knows everything I've ever done.

Come meet this God who loves me and knows everything I've ever done.

I just think it's, I think it's a beautiful text.

Peter: And many, many Samaritans from that town believed in him.

David: Right.

Peter: Because of her testimony.

David: Because of her testimony.

And then they go and they meet him and they're like, and now we don't believe in him just because of your testimony.

We believe in him because we've heard from ourselves.

Peter: Right.

David: And our, you know, I think sometimes our witnessing can get so involved in controversial topics or, you know, teachings that are somehow esoteric or distanced or abstract from daily life. Or impersonal, right.

Peter: You know, we talk about kind of a morality that's important, but it's not personal.

David: Right.

Peter: And sometimes that maybe kind of paralyzes us from making sure we don't want to say things wrong or offend anybody. Instead, she's just saying, here's what he did for me.

David: Right.

Peter: And that's a, I would think that would be a freeing way to think about it.

David: Right.

Everybody's in the town.

It's like, if he actually told you everything you ever did and he still talked to you, well, we got to meet this guy, you know.

And, you know, and, you know, you're witnessing to other people.

They know about your life.

And then you're like, I have a God who knows about my life and he forgives me.

So come meet him.

Come and see.

It's just a beautiful text.

Jessica: And now it's time for the Ask Jessica jar, the part of the show where we pick a question from the jar and I answer it from the perspective of the person in the pew. All right, David, pick a question.

David: Okay.  
Which part of the sermon might be confusing?

Jessica: I can think of which parts of the text would be confusing.

David: Okay.

Jessica: But I think that you really helped explain things in a way.

David: Okay.

Jessica: No, about the woman.  
Is she promiscuous?  
Is she a prostitute?  
Because I think understanding who she is sheds more light on the conversation that Jesus had with her.

David: Right.

Jessica: So either way, what Jesus did was reaching out to an outcast.

David: Right.  
And I think that we can say that for sure.

Jessica: Yeah.

David: Why she was outcast, there's different ways of talking about her.

Peter: Well, and we didn't even bring up the fact that she's a Samaritan.

David: Right.

Peter: I mean, that's something that for some people will just go straight over their heads because they're not thinking those terms.

David: That's true.

Peter: But that would be something you could highlight a little bit too.

David: Yeah, definitely.  
Definitely.

Jessica: Great.  
Thank you so much, David.

Peter, what about you?  
What would you preach about?

Peter: Okay, if you are going with the Old Testament series that I suggested a couple weeks ago and not going with Dave's really good idea for a sermon on the John text, every time we do this, I think, man, I should have gone that way.

Jessica: No, I like that you have a sermon series because it makes me think about what will come next time. And it kind of ties the weeks together a little bit. That's cool too.

Peter: All right.  
Well, well, good.  
But if you're going that route, then I'm going to stick with the Old Testament readings and go with the Exodus chapter 17 text.  
And again, kind of the whole plan for the series as a whole is that we're working our way toward Holy Week.  
We're kind of reliving and remembering the big story of the Old Testament.  
We thought about the guilt, the persistence of guilt that started with Adam and Eve.  
And then we talked about the turn of grace last week where God calls Abraham.  
And then this week, I'm kind of tentatively thinking of calling this sermon the end of grumbling.

David: Okay.

Peter: Because it struck me as I was looking just in Exodus 17.  
So, I mean, you guys know the Old Testament.  
Exodus 17 basically comes right on the heels of the Exodus.  
So Exodus chapter 14 is going through the Red Sea.  
Exodus 15 is Moses' song.  
And then Exodus 16, God has saved us.  
Here we go.  
And 16 verse 2, the grumbling begins.  
Of course, it begins in chapter 16 because there's no food.  
And then it continues in chapter 17 in our text when there's no water.  
And so what I want to think about is this people of God and their struggles to trust.  
Because I think it's all of us are going to struggle.  
And some of our struggles are big.  
Some of our struggles are relatively little.  
But what seems to be kind of a universal is what we do with our struggles is usually some sort of grumbling.  
And so I want to kind of name that and help people see how much a part that is of their lives.  
But I also want to take seriously the reasons for grumbling.  
Sometimes there's really good reasons.  
You don't have any food.

Jessica: Yeah, no water is kind of a big deal.

Peter: Yeah.

Jessica: I think if I was in the wilderness with my kids and they didn't have any water, I would do some grumbling too.

Peter: Yeah, it wouldn't take long before you think, oh, what's going on here? We're just going to all die of thirst out here.

David: What's the difference between grumbling and prayer?

Peter: That's an interesting question.  
I mean, I think it's a little bit the attitude and the heart with which you talk to God.

David: Okay.

Peter: I mean, I think they were largely grumbling.  
You have to look a little bit more carefully at the text here.  
They were really kind of grumbling against Moses in verse 3.  
And, I mean, you could look back in chapter 16, and then grumbling comes up again in Numbers. Chapter 14, 16, and 17, there's more of that.  
So you'd have to look and see if that holds across the board.  
At least in this case, the grumbling is maybe more when we take our frustrations to others.

David: Right.  
Yeah, rather than God.

Peter: Rather than God.

David: Right.  
And I think the attitude, right?  
I mean, are we humbly laying before God the fact that, you know, I really would like to have some water?  
Or are we kind of belligerently trying to make God do whatever we think we need, right?

Peter: Yeah.

David: So, yeah.  
So attitude, the heart.

Peter: So attitude, posture.

David: To whom you're speaking.

Peter: Right.

David: Yeah, how you're speaking to them.

Peter: Right.  
So these are kind of things I would explore.  
And maybe to get us started, Jessica, if you would read Exodus 17, verses 1 to 3.

Jessica: All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of sin by stages according to the commandment of the Lord and camped at Rephidim.  
How does that sound, Rephidim?  
But there was no water for the people to drink.  
Therefore, the people quarreled with Moses and said, give us water to drink.  
And Moses said to them, why do you quarrel with me?  
Why do you not trust the Lord?  
But the people thirsted there for water.  
And the people grumbled against Moses and said, why did you bring us up out of Egypt  
to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?

Peter: All right.  
So this is, again, this is the very beginning of the wandering in the wilderness.  
Now, we know it's going to be 40 years of this.  
But Israel doesn't know that yet.  
If you locate yourself as an Israelite...

David: Don't just make it worse.

Peter: I mean, yeah, just think what they're grumbling would be like.  
But they don't know what's coming.  
All they know is they just finally got free.  
And all of a sudden, the freedom that they're experiencing doesn't make everything perfect.  
And there's some very basic, like you talked about, Jessica, human needs.  
We have to eat.  
We have to drink.  
These are not minor matters.  
But what do they do with their minor matters?  
What do they do with their real struggles that are not minor matters?  
Well, they grumble against Moses.  
But it made me wonder, you know, I was thinking about what do you think are not the little things, but what are the big things  
that you think make it difficult to trust God today?

Jessica: Paying the bills.  
They didn't have water.  
You might not be able to make your car payment.  
You know, if someone loses a job, that's a pretty real basic life need that  
it would be hard to not say, God, what's going on?  
I need to feed my kids.

Peter: Okay.

So a loss of a job or inability to pay bills.  
What other really serious things do you think  
would be reasons, good reasons to grumble?

Jessica: Which ones do I want to share out loud, right?

Peter: Well, isn't that kind of the thing here, Jessica?  
There's things that people struggle with deep down that are hard even to utter.  
You certainly don't want to utter to other people sometimes.  
And it's hard even, I think, maybe to utter to God when you have basic  
relational needs or physical needs or needs of mental health or, you know,  
you look around and you see what God is seemingly  
providing for everyone else and you're not on that end.  
And what I would like to do, I think, in this part of the sermon, or at least at  
some point in the sermon, is get those kinds of struggles on the minds of my  
hearers, whether or not they could articulate it or would want to articulate it.  
So I want to take that seriously and acknowledge that grumbling, first of all,  
comes naturally to us, but it also... there's good reasons in a world that is  
broken and distorted and corrupted and traumatized by sin.  
There are good reasons to grumble.  
But then that's, of course, not the only idea that I want to reflect on.  
I do want to talk about the end of grumbling.  
And I kind of have that in mind in a couple different ways.

David: Do you mean end by stopping or end by the goal?

Peter: No, I mean kind of end what leads to the end of grumbling.  
And then also, kind of more eschatologically, I want to go in the  
sermon, toward the time where there will be no more grumbling.

David: Okay.

Peter: So kind of both and.  
So a way to get at that would be to emphasize  
that God provides in ways that we do not expect.  
Okay, and this, you know, you get from the text.  
I mean, would you read verses 5 and 6?

Jessica: And the Lord said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you  
some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the 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 shall come out of it,  
and the people will drink."

Peter: Now, isn't that weird?

Jessica: Yeah.

Peter: I mean, it's such an odd way for God to provide.  
I mean, he could have had a rainstorm blow in and everyone, you know, get a way to

gather the water, get a bowl and gather the water.  
He could have led them around the next pile of sand to an oasis or something like that.

And instead, he tells Moses to go hit a rock.

David: Well, what I think is really weird is right before this, right, Moses cries to God and he says, they're almost ready to stone me.

Peter: Yeah, right.

David: So they've been picking up rocks to kill Moses and God picks up a rock and uses it to give him water.  
I mean, it's kind of weird.

Peter: It is kind of weird.  
And this is where there's a lot of stuff that you could try to...  
And sometimes you read creative interpretations of passages like this and people go all sorts of...

David: The rock that followed them.

Peter: Yeah.  
I mean, well, just...

David: Hebrews or...

Peter: You know, you can allegorize a lot of stuff here.  
There's just a lot that seems odd.  
But what I'm thinking about here is in the narrative, I'm trying to slow down my recollection of the narrative and imagining what the people were thinking when they watched Moses.  
Apparently, you know, the Lord said to Moses, so we don't know exactly how that happened, but he did tell them, pass on before the people, take with you some elders, and then take your staff and I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb.  
I'm not quite sure what exactly to make of that, but then strike the rock and water will come out and the people will drink.  
And so I'm imagining slowing down this whole thing and having these people watch.  
Okay, what's he doing?  
He's got his staff.  
The staff, we knew that from the Nile.  
That's really good.  
And he's got some elders.  
He must be going to get some water for us.  
And then he goes to this rock.

David: And hits it.

Peter: And hits it.  
And you think to yourself, what?

This is going to solve our problem?

And it's that moment when Moses is following the Lord's instructions and before the water comes out and the people drink that I kind of want to slow down and help people see that's kind of where we are right now.

David: Right, yeah.

Peter: Because we are between the times when God has made some promises. Promises that he made, of course, throughout the Old Testament. Promises that all came to a conclusion in Jesus. Jesus' life, death, resurrection, his ascension. And he's promised to return. To take away all sin, all pain, all death, all grumbling. And yet, he's not back yet. And so we're kind of in this in-between time. And we are called to and we are invited to, and I think we're empowered to by the promises of God and his spirit, to trust in him in this in-between time where there's still reasons to grumble. And yet, God has promised that when Jesus returns, there will be no more grumbling. There will be the end of grumbling. Now, with that end in mind, trusting that God, who not only could bring water out of a rock, but could bring Jesus back from the dead and can restore a woman at the well who had been through the ringer for how long, this is the God who hears our prayers. This is the God who cares about us as deeply and personally as he cares about the Samaritan woman. And he has said, there will come a time when I return and I will make things new. And so, in that way, we're kind of... the end of grumbling is coming. And because of our certainty in the return of Christ and how he will make all things new, now the things that cause us to grumble maybe about God to each other or about each other, those maybe can be turned into the end of grumbling and the beginning of kind of a life of prayer, a life of gratitude, a life, if you're going to stick with G words, gladness, a way to help people transform their grumbling inclinations toward a life of joy and prayer and anticipation for the Lord to return.

Jessica: Awesome, Peter.  
Thank you.  
It's time for the Jessica jar.

Peter: Which image was most relatable?

Jessica: The very first one about grumbling for provision. So, instead of saying, those stupid Israelites, they're always grumbling about those silly things, but that's for real. Like, that's us. Not like a... what seems like a myth in the desert.

So, bringing that around and making that real makes you...  
makes me sit up in the pew and perks my ears and make, okay, now give me the  
answer.

Thank you.

Now help me with that, please.

Great, Peter.

Thank you.

Well, that's all for today.

We have free resources to guide your next step in planning at [concordiatheology.org](http://concordiatheology.org).

Check it out.

If you'd like to see this show continue, please subscribe for free, share,  
leave a review, check out our YouTube channel.

I'm your host and producer, Jessica Bordeleau.

Join us next week here at Lectionary Kick-start when Dr. David Schmitt and

Dr. Peter Nafzger will spark your thoughts for next Sunday.

Yeah, can you shake it into the microphone so that you can hear you have ice in it.

I hear that you have ice in it.

David: I do have ice in there.  
Right?  
Keeps the gin cold.

Jessica: Very nice.