

A message for everyone

Heather Smith *reflects on* John 4:5-42

The Samaritans, a race that still exists today, claim to be descended from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh who, with others, formed the northern kingdom of Israel after the death of Solomon. The tradition is that ten of the twelve tribes of Israel formed the northern kingdom, while the tribes of Judah and Benjamin formed the southern kingdom, Judah, based on Jerusalem. By the time of Jesus, those in Judah had become known as the Jews and they hated the Samaritans. There is no quarrel like a family quarrel and this was certainly a major bust up. Jacob, whose sons were the founders of the twelve tribes, would, as the saying goes, be turning in his grave if he knew about their failure to get on.

If we had not already understood the history, today's Gospel brings it all into greater focus with the setting of Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. Here Jacob met Rachel in a foundational Jewish story. But the well is in Samaria.

Well versed in the scriptures, Jesus would have understood the irony of all of this. His disciples were astonished that he would talk to a woman, worse still, a Samaritan woman. But she is not the only surprising recipient of Jesus' message and his healing miracles. Gradually, the disciples learn that his message is for everyone.

We too need to learn that the message is for everyone. Who might we be excluding, and why? 🙏



God, who longs to include everyone in the kingdom, lead us to those who are excluded. Give us the words to describe the good news we bring and the grace to demonstrate by our actions that the kingdom includes everyone. Amen.

Leap into Lent

Ricarda Witcombe continues her Lenten series.

The French word *lent* means "slow". We see it in music as "lente". Our season of Lent invites us to live more slowly. To take the time to savour – or even simply to notice – what we're doing. When we are in a hurry, we can become like monsters. We push people and things out of our way so we can

achieve our aim. We have time neither to notice each other, nor to let others notice us. We cease to tend our days and instead we ravage them. The discipline of Lent can pull us back from this damaging way of life that is so easy to slip into.

Mountain guides whisper "slow, slow" to people who trek, because they know it is the only way they will reach the summit. Could you say those words to yourself through the days of this week, and see what differences it makes? 🙏

“Remember who you are. Don't compromise for anyone, for any reason. You are a child of the Almighty God. Live that truth.

Lysa TerKeurst (born 1969), author and speaker

Creatures of the Bible

The snake

by Caroline Fletcher

There are mixed attitudes towards snakes in biblical writings. Asps and vipers inhabited Israel, so it is unsurprising that snakes were feared because of their bites (Amos 5:18-19). Serpents were often called "fiery", possibly due to the burning sensation caused by their venom (Isaiah 14:29).

However, even the snake in the Garden of Eden is not portrayed

completely negatively. The Genesis story reflects a widespread belief that snakes were "more crafty than any other wild animal". This idea is also behind Jesus' appeal for his disciples to be "wise as serpents" (Matthew 10:16).

Snakes were associated, too, with healing and immortality. In Numbers 21, many Israelites are bitten by snakes and God tells Moses to hold up a bronze snake, so that anyone looking upon it may be healed. Later, Jesus likens the lifting up of the bronze snake to his crucifixion, which also brought new life (John 3:14-15). 🙏

Church of Scotland: Orphir and Stenness Parish

Interim Moderator: Rev June Freeth 721449

Locum Minister Rev Martin Prentice **Session Clerk:** Nicol 811242

There is a loop system. Adjust hearing aids to benefit.

A warm invitation is extended to everyone to meet in the hall at the back of the church, after the service, for a cup of tea.

Intimations

Tuesday 17th March – 7pm – Fellowship. The Lent Study for Fellowship is Solitude and the related bible reading is 1 Kings 19 v 1-14.

8pm – Choir

Thursday 19th March – 10am – 12noon Community Café in the kirk hall

Sunday 22nd March – 11.15am Communion

Thank you to those who gave the kirk a good spring-clean. It is looking great.

Hymns:

167 – “Guide me, O thou great Jehovah”

550 – “As the deer pants for the water”

459 – “Crown him with many crowns”

561 – “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine”

525 – “Have you heard the raindrops”

Readings:

Exodus 17:1-7 Romans 5:1-11

As the congregation enter into the Temple courts ‘today’ on this festival day, with singing, shouting and thanksgiving to God, ‘they are warned not to harden their hearts’ as their ancestors had done in the events of Exodus. The Lord says “Don’t harden your hearts as Israel did at Meribah, as they did at Massah in the wilderness”. There the people tried God’s patience and courted His wrath – despite the fact “they had seen many miracles”. “Do not test the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 6: 16). The consequence of this distrust is fatal; For God vows - ‘they will never enter my place of rest’ (Psalm 95:v.11). Though delivered in the form of a warning, this prophesy conveys an earnest wish. The people are urged to acknowledge and trust God so as to enter the rest of God. Is this not also the case today – that many people among His flock, through hardening their hearts, are trying God’s patience and courting His wrath?

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May the God of peace go with us, as we travel from this place
May the love of Jesus keep us firm in hope and full of grace.