



still waters

home church studies

Psalm 95

[Worship]

1 O come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! 2 Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! 3 For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. 4 In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. 5 The sea is his, for he made it, and the dry land, which his hands have formed. 6 O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! 7 For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. O that today you would listen to his voice! 8 Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, 9 when your ancestors tested me, and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work. 10 For forty years I loathed that generation and said, "They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they do not regard my ways." 11 Therefore in my anger I swore, "They shall not enter my rest."

Consider:

[Words]

God is the good gift who keeps on giving. These texts converge in the wonder that God gives; we receive and live by what we receive from God. The subtext is that we cannot of our own power and resources generate life for ourselves. We are dependent upon God's faithful generosity without which we cannot live.

The Exodus narrative is about the gift of water from rock. In an arid context Moses is instructed by God to secure water from rock, an unlikely source. The counterpoint in the narrative is that Israel "quarreled and tested" God, unwilling to trust itself to God's inexplicable goodness.

The reason we read Psalm 95 now is that in its latter verses there is an allusion to the crisis in Exodus 17. Verses 7-11 of the psalm portray the hard-hearted who do not trust God but always test God's fidelity. Verses 1-6, by contrast, offer a people who willingly belong to and rely on God. It is as though the two parts of the psalm voice the choices always offered in faith, either trust in God's goodness or choose a pervasive doubt that trusts none.

John's gospel narrative works the same "water" theme. Here it concerns the thirsty woman at the well. She has a hard time moving from the literal to the metaphorical; when she "gets it," she sees that Jesus is now the water of life that will sustain in every arid context. Jesus is the great sustainer!

In Romans 5, the move goes further from the gift of water to the abundance of God's love. It is boundless love that nourishes and sustains. The imagery is an overflowing abundance that meets every need. Of course the water-love of God is given via God's suffering in Christ in which the disciples are called to share. Lent is a time for relinquishing self-sufficiency and drinking deeply of water that ends in glad obedience. The folk in Psalm 95:1-6 are committed to glad obedience, reliant on God, and committed to God's alternative way in the world. – Walter Bruggemann

[Scripture]

Romans 5.1-11

1 Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 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. 3 And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 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. 6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. 8 But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. 9 Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. 10 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. 11 But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.