

## YAHWEH IS HERE FOR YOU!



### *Scripture:*

### **Psalm 95**

<sup>1</sup>Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. <sup>2</sup>Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.

<sup>3</sup>For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods. <sup>4</sup>In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. <sup>5</sup>The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.

<sup>6</sup>Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker; <sup>7</sup>for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.

Today, if only you would hear his voice, <sup>8</sup>“Do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the wilderness, <sup>9</sup>where your ancestors tested me; they tried me, though they had seen what I did. <sup>10</sup>For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, ‘They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways.’ <sup>11</sup>So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’”

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

(There was a dramatic reading of John 4:5-38, the story of the Samaritan woman at the well, which ended with reading verses 39-42.)

<sup>5</sup>So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

<sup>6</sup>Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

<sup>7</sup>When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” <sup>8</sup>(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

<sup>9</sup>The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

<sup>10</sup>Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

<sup>11</sup>“Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? <sup>12</sup>Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

<sup>13</sup>Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup>but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

<sup>15</sup>The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

<sup>16</sup>He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”

<sup>17</sup>“I have no husband,” she replied.

Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. <sup>18</sup>The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

<sup>19</sup>“Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup>Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

<sup>21</sup>“Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup>You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup>Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. <sup>24</sup>God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

<sup>25</sup>The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

<sup>26</sup>Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”

<sup>27</sup>Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?”

<sup>28</sup>Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, <sup>29</sup>“Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” <sup>30</sup>They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

<sup>31</sup>Meanwhile his disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat something.”

<sup>32</sup>But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about.”

<sup>33</sup>Then his disciples said to each other, “Could someone have brought him food?”

<sup>34</sup>“My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. <sup>35</sup>Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. <sup>36</sup>Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. <sup>37</sup>Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true. <sup>38</sup>I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.”

<sup>39</sup>Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.” <sup>40</sup>So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. <sup>41</sup>And because of his words many more became believers.

<sup>42</sup>They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”

### **This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!**



#### **YAHWEH IS HERE FOR YOU!**

The Samaritan woman at the well story describes such a deep encounter with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! I hope this dramatic reading gave you a deeper perspective on how dark and bleak her life might have been before she met Jesus.

I’m reading a bestselling book by Barbara Brown Taylor called *Learning to Walk in the Dark*. She talks about being afraid of the dark beginning in her childhood when there were monsters under her bed. Brown shares about how she overcame her fear of the dark through

various methods including remembering the stories of the Old Testament when God spoke to people in the dark. The first in the Bible is the story where God took Abraham outside in the dark to look up at the stars. He promised him he would have as many descendants as he could count in the stars. There is Jacob’s story in Genesis 28 where he dreamed of a ladder leading up to heaven while he was sleeping outside in the dark. How did you learn to not be afraid of the dark?

Exodus 13 tells the story of God leading the Israelites through the darkness during forty years

of exile. “By day the LORD (who they called Yahweh) went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire God gave them light, so that they could travel by day or night.”

The forty years wandering in the wilderness must have seemed like a long dark time of struggle to the Israelites. Without the pillar of fire and the cloud to guide them, it would have been very easy to give up trying to find the Promised Land.

### **THE SAMARITAN WOMAN**

This Samaritan woman must have been feeling like she was in darkness for many years, too. She suffered all those years of disappointments in her marriages and the death of spouses with no children to care for her as she aged. So she was living with a man who could or would not marry her when she met Jesus at the well. Jesus must have sensed she was in a dark mood. So the light of the world burst through her darkness and all those dry years of sorrow were quenched with God’s living water of hope. What a heavenly gift she was given. I wonder: What would have happened if she had been too depressed or felt too unworthy to acknowledge Christ’s presence there at the well?

In this one encounter with the Divine Presence this Samaritan woman is liberated from her prison of darkness. At the same time he liberates this woman and shows her the light, Jesus teaches great lessons to his followers.

### **EQUALLY VALUED IN THE SIGHT OF GOD**

First, Jesus publicly demonstrates that women and those who were judged as “unworthy” (like all the Samaritans) should be acknowledged as equally valuable in the sight of God and liberated from the patriarchal cultural discrimination that reigned at that time. (It was Samaritans then but if this event took place today the woman might have been Muslim.)

Jesus broke down many barriers and social norms in this story and shocked his disciples by speaking with compassion to a Samaritan and a woman. What Jesus did in this one event was radical and revolutionary.

Second, Jesus does not deny he is the Messiah when this woman identifies him, and at

the same time he offers her living water, proving that he came “not to condemn the world but to save it.” (John 3:17)

**Third, the Living Water symbolism Jesus uses in his outreach to the woman illustrates how essential his message is for our lives. It is as important as water is for us to live healthy physically and spiritually. The living water also reminds us how God is present in everything.**

### **SHARE OUR JOY**

Like the woman in today’s passage we are also expected to share with others our joy of being in God’s presence. The Samaritan understood that Jesus was offering a way of life for her that would cleanse and heal the darkness that she carried with her. So she became the first woman evangelist who is remembered for calling a whole village to drop what they were doing and run with her to the well to listen to Christ’s message. So he stayed with them two whole days. That was a long message.

### **“WALKING IN THE DARKNESS WITH THE LORD”**

This is the first of four sermons in a series titled: “Walking in the Darkness with the Lord.” This sermon is: “Yahweh is Here for YOU”; next week is: “Blind to God’s Presence?” the following week is: “If Only, Trust”; and Palm Sunday is: “Shout to the Lord!”

Bring your friends to all of these Sundays leading up to and including Easter! This is a great time to introduce them to our church and share this sacred holy space with your friends. .

I titled this sermon: “Yahweh is Here for You” because using the term Yahweh for God is the ancient way of speaking about God.

Theologian Rob Bell is an Old Testament scholar. He teaches in his video called ‘Breathe’ that the Hebrew name for Israel’s God and for Jesus, “Yahweh,” was essentially four letters. We would say Y, H, V, H. But in Hebrew, the letters are pronounced: ‘Yod, Heh, Vav, Heh,’” like another name for God: Je-Ho-Vah.

“Some pronounce the name ‘Yahweh’ or ‘Yahveh,’ although in many traditions the name isn’t even pronounced, because it’s considered so sacred, so mysterious, and so holy. In fact, the ancient rabbis believed that these letters were kind of breathing God when spoken...

Rob Bell says, “Us humans.... We’re fragile and vulnerable, we come from the dust.

“And yet at the same time we’ve been breathed into by the creator of the universe. And this divine breath is in every single human being.”

### **FRAGILE AND SACRED**

Are there ways in which you feel sacred and divine and feel the divine presence in and around you?

Do you think it’s possible to feel fragile and sacred at the same time?

Rob Bell states, “In the Bible, the word for ‘breath’ is the same word as the word for ‘spirit.’ In the Hebrew language it’s the word ‘ruah,’ in the Greek language, it’s the word ‘pneuma.’

“When you let God in, when you breathe, what happens is you become aware of God in all the things and you also become aware of all the things you need to let go of.

“If you were to be totally honest about what’s going on inside of you, is there anything you need right now to breathe out? Does it feel dark around you when you think about your problems?”

What are you holding on to that you need to let go of? What do you need to breathe out?

Ephesians 4 says, Our God is over all and through all and in all.

Rob Bell continues, “You are created in the sacred image of God. And so are you and so are you. The divine breath and light is flowing through all of us, and it’s flowing through the person next to you and it’s flowing through the person next to them.

“May you come to see that God is here right now with us all of the time. May you come to see that the ground you are standing on is holy. And as you slow down, may you become aware that it is in the ‘Yod,’ ‘Heh,’ ‘Vav,’ ‘Heh’ that we live and we move and we breathe.”

Jesus is the breath and the living water offered to all, especially those who are walking in darkness.

**You can choose to drink of his goodness and follow his healing light, or you can carry on in the darkness. It is your choice to breathe in God’s light and life giving spirit. God invites you to be aware of her presence in and around you. May that awareness bring you peace and hope that together you and God will make your way through whatever darkness you may be carrying this Lenten Season.**

Let’s savor this sacred moment and being together in this holy space by listening to God in silence. Ponder how he is your light to show you the way out of the darkness that you may be holding on to.

### **Benediction:**

**Mark Twain once said, “Kindness is a language the deaf can hear and the blind can see.”**

**So as you make your way through whatever darkness or struggle that you are dealing with, remember to be kind and love your neighbor as yourself. Mark Twain also said, “The best way to cheer yourself up is to cheer up somebody else.”**

**And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen**



**Rev. Dr. Cindy Alloway  
Presbyterian Church of the Roses  
2500 Patio Court  
Santa Rosa, CA 95405**