

## **LENT 3 (2026)**

“Lord, you are in this place.  
You are with us now.  
Help us to relax in your presence,  
to rest in your heart,  
to reflect on your love  
and to listen to your voice.”

There is no doubt that the author of our Lent Book, Liz Dodd, is keen to rethink today’s long Gospel reading. In this famous encounter between the nameless woman at the well and Jesus, who is discovered to be the Messiah, it was unheard of for Jew and Samaritan to even speak with one another so casually and intimately. Sr. Liz says:

“Jesus finds himself alone and thirsty in an inhospitable place, dependent on a woman of lower social status. It is an encounter that could have sabotaged his ministry - and his position as a Jewish teacher – before it even began. But instead Jesus discerns it to be the moment to launch his public ministry: it is the first time that he discloses who he understands himself to be. It is a perfect dynamic of downward mobility because, as Jesus himself moves downwards, he creates space for the other to move upwards.”

She teases this out and exploits the many areas of our lives which cover up prejudice of any kind without actually mentioning the words 'class' or, 'racism', or 'snobbery'.

But this is what she infers of the powerful or rich, those who 'oppress' others or judge unkindly those considered to be 'beneath' them in whichever way. Our author is understandably passionate about the refugees her own community in Nottingham both welcome and support, because she would hear so many tales of 'de-humanization', and the horrors of abandonment and war; she is as passionate then, about issues of justice as she is about the 'spirituality' of 'inclusiveness.' Sr Liz tells it how it is:

“For the Samaritans, Jews like Jesus (she says) were persecutors; for Jesus, a Samaritan was a heretic – ritually unclean, an ancient enemy. Imagine this encounter taking place in Northern Ireland, Gaza or the Donbas, and you will have a sense of its cultural vocabulary.”

Perhaps in the present headline news of Jewish and American aggression across the Middle East, we should cling on to our own story nearer home of the Good Friday Agreement and later, that bold and courageous shaking of hands between the late Queen Elizabeth and former IRA commander, Martin McGuinness in 2012, as part of her Jubilee tour.

I do believe that despite all the tragedy of endless war and bitterness between different nations or factions, today's

Gospel does offer us the hope of healing wounds instead of re-opening them – and leading by example, the example which Jesus teaches us. Despite the initial nervousness, let us say, in this encounter at the well, there is a real sense of relaxing in the Lord's presence and feeling accepted, valued and loved. It is like hearing the whisper of God's spirit, the wind and energy of the Spirit: blowing us forward, making us stronger people, more compassionate, and more accepting of our differences.

The Dean spoke about this on Tuesday in a very personal way as I am sure the Bishop will again, in a different context, *this* Tuesday. There is a passion in being passionate about the Gospel call and never more so than today. Jesus invites all of us to come to the living waters to find there refreshment and lasting happiness and peace – however costly the journey and pilgrimage to discover and, be liberated by them.

May this prayer be ours, for our living Lord to fill up our refreshing, cleansing, water bottles, to overflowing:

“Strengthen us, Lord when we are weak and vulnerable.  
Assure us of your presence when the questions arise.  
Lift us up when we are down.  
Give us faith where there is fear.  
Enfold us in your love when courage fails.”

Amen.

