

(steady organ music) (choir singing upbeat music)

- Good morning, we'd like to welcome you to Duke Chapel on this third Sunday in Lent. We'd like to ask for special prayers of remembrance for those in the university community who are traveling for spring break, especially those students who are participating in mission trips to Honduras, Mexico, Lumberton, the Larsh in Canada, and Appalachia. Our guest preacher today is the Reverend Nancy Farree-Clark, pastor to the congregation at Duke Chapel. Nancy, of course, is well-known to all of us and we are grateful for her leadership in this service. She is married to Dr. Thomas B. Clark III, a forensic pathologist in the Office of the Chief State Medical Examiner and he is serving as our guest organist for today. They are a very talented family. We welcome the Durham Magnet Center School and their director, Ms. Scott-Hill and appreciate their music leadership for our service today. Let us continue our worship with the call to worship. Please stand. O come, let us sing to the Lord.

Congregation: Let us sing to the (mumbles) To our God.

- Let us come into God's presence with thanksgiving.

Congregation: We thank him (mumbles). (organ music) (joyful organ music) (all singing)

- Let us pray. We hear you calling us, God. You are among us here and now. By your grace, we have gathered for worship. With the assurance of your love, we dare to open our lives once more to your reconciling action. In you, we find the truth that reveals and transforms. In the sharing of songs and prayers, we find the courage to grow and change. Bless us, we pray, with gifts to empower our ministries, amen. You may be seated.

- Let us pray the prayer for illumination.

All: Open our hearts and minds, O God, by the power of your Holy Spirit so that as the word is read and proclaimed we may hear your message with joy this day, amen. The Old Testament reading is from the book of Exodus 17:1-7. "From the wilderness of sin, "the whole congregation of the Israelites "journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. "They camped at Rephidim, "but there was no water for the people to drink. "The people quarreled with Moses and said, "'Give us water to drink.'" Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? "Why do you test the Lord?" "But the people thirsted there for water. "And the people complained against Moses and said, "'Why did you bring us out of Egypt? "'To kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" "So Moses cried out to the Lord, "'What shall I do with these people? "'They are almost ready to stone me.'" "The Lord said to Moses, "'Go on ahead of the people "'and take some of the elders of Israel with you. "'Take in your hand the staff "'with which you struck the Nile and go. "'I will be standing there in front of you "'on the rock at Horeb. "'Strike the rock and the water will come out of it "'so that the people

may drink.' "Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. "He called the place Massah and Meribah "because the Israelites quarreled "and tested the Lord saying, ""Is the Lord among us or not?"" This is the word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

- The epistle reading is from Romans 5:1-11 and 13-17. "Therefore, since we are justified by faith, "we have peace with God through our Lord, Jesus Christ, "through whom, we have obtained access through his grace "in which we stand. "And we boast in our hope of sharing, the Glory of God. "And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, "knowing that suffering produces endurance "and endurance produces character "and character produces hope. "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. "For while we were still weak, at the right time, "Christ died for the ungodly. "Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, "though perhaps, for a good person, "someone might actually dare to die. "But God proves his love for us "and that while we were yet sinners, "Christ died for us. "Much more surely then, "now that we have been justified by his blood "we will be saved through Him from the wrath of God. "For, if while we were enemies, "we were reconciled to God through the death of his son, "much more surely, having been reconciled, "we will be saved by his life. "But more than that, we even boast in God, "through our Lord Jesus Christ, "through whom we have now received reconciliation." This is the word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

Debra: The appointed psalm for the day is Psalm 95, found on pages 814 and 15 in your hymn book. Please stand as we read responsively. "O Come, let us sing to the Lord."

Congregation: "Let us shout aloud "to the rock of our salvation."

- "Let us come into God's presence with thanksgiving."

Congregation: "Let us bring forth "(mumbles) song and praise for him."

- "For the Lord is a great God "and a great ruler above all gods "and whose hands are the depths of the Earth "and also the heights of the mountains."

Congregation: "The sea belongs to God, "who made it and the dry land with God's power."

- "O Come, let us worship and bow down."

Congregation: "Let us kneel before the Lord our maker."

- "For the Lord is our god."

Congregation: "We are the people of God's pasture, "the sheep of God's hand."

- "Hear the voice of the Lord today, "harden not your hearts as at Meribah, "as on the day at Massah in the wilderness "when your fore bearers tested me "and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work."

Congregation: "For 40 years, I loathed that generation "and said they are a people who err in their hearts "and they are not aware of my ways. "Therefore I swore in my anger "they shall not enter my rest." (solemn organ music) (all singing)

- A reading from the gospel, according to St. John. "So, Jesus came to a Samaritan city called Sychar "near the plot of ground that Jacob "had given to his son Joseph. "Jacob's well was there. "And Jesus, tired out by his journey, "was sitting by the well. "It was about noon. "A Samaritan woman came to draw water "and Jesus said to her, "'Give me a drink.'" "His disciples had gone to the city to buy food. "The Samaritan woman said to him, "'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, "'a woman of Samaria? "' Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.'" "Jesus answered her, '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. "The woman said to him, 'Sir, "'you have no bucket and the well is deep. "'Where did you get that living water? "'Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob "'who gave us the well and with his sons "and with his flocks drank from it?' "Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water "'will be thirsty again. "'But those who drink of the water that I will give them, "'will never be thirsty. "'The water that I give will become in them "'a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.' "The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water "'so that I may never be thirsty "'or have to keep coming here to draw water.' "Jesus said to her, 'Go call your husband and come back.' "The woman answered, 'I have no husband.' "Jesus said to her, 'You are right in saying, "'I have no husband," for you have had five husbands "'and the one you have now is not your husband. "'What you have said is true.' "The woman said to him, 'Sir, I see that you are a prophet. "'Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, "'but you say that the place where the people "'must worship is in Jerusalem. "Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, "'the hour is coming when you will worship the father "'neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. "'You worship what you do not know. "'We worship what we know, "'for salvation is from the Jews. "'But the hour is coming and is now here "'when the true worshipers will worship the Father "'in spirit and truth, "'for the father seeks such as these to worship him. "'God is spirit, and those who worship him "'must worship in spirit and truth.' "The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming, "'who is called Christ. "'When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.' "Jesus said to her, 'I am he, "'the one who is speaking to you.' "Just then, his disciples came. "They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, "but no one said, 'What do you want?' "or 'Why are you speaking with her?' "Then the woman left her water jar "and went back to the city. "She said to the people, 'Come and see a man "'who told me everything I have ever done. "'He cannot be the Messiah, can he?' "They left the city and were on their way to him. "Meanwhile, the disciples were urging him, "'Rabbi, eat something.' "But he said to them, 'I have food to eat "'that you do not know about.' "So, the disciples said to one another, "'Surely, no one has brought him something to eat.' "Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will "'of Him who sent me and to complete His work. "'Do you not say, "Four months more, "'then comes the harvest?" "'But I tell you, look around you "'and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. "'The reaper is already receiving wages "'and is gathering fruit for eternal life "'so that sower and reaper may rejoice together, "'for here the

saying holds true, ""One sews and another reaps." ""I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. ""Others have labored and you have ""entered into their labor.' ""Many Samaritans from that city believed in him, "because of the woman's testimony. ""He told me everything I have ever done.' ""So, when the Samaritans came to him, "they asked him to to stay with them "and he stayed there two days. "And many more believed because of his word. "They said to the woman, 'It is no longer ""because of what you said that we believe, ""for we have heard for ourselves ""and we know that this is truly the savoir of the world.'" This is the word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God. (congregation rustling) (elegant piano music) (choir singing angelic music) (rolling piano music) (choir singing) ♪ Let my spirit rejoice ♪ ♪ Let my spirit rejoice ♪ ♪ Let my spirit rejoice ♪ (energetic choir singing)

- We are grateful to these wonderful students from the Magnet Center for sharing in the leadership of today's worship. Thanks to all of you. In both our Old Testament and gospel lessons today we read about God's miraculous gift of water. Water, one of God's earliest and very best ideas. Two atoms of hydrogen married to one atom of oxygen to put it a little simplistically. Who would have thought such a wonderful thing could come of it? It is an essential element for life. Neither you nor I nor any other living creature would be here without it. It can also be deeply expressive of meaning in life. Who among us hasn't been calmed by the wide expanse of the open sea or moved by the sight of human tears? Water, perhaps, more than any other substance, plays an essential role in the telling of salvation history. Remember how, in the beginning of time, God brooded over the face of the waters and brought forth light? Later, God sent the great flood and judgment to destroy the Earth, but God chose to save Noah and his family on the ark, sending a rainbow in the clouds as a sign of his covenant. Moses lead the children of Israel to freedom while God parted the Red Sea and they walked across on dry land. Jesus came to Earth, nurtured in the water of Mary's womb and was baptized in the River Jordan. He showed his disciples the way to love one another by stooping to the ground and washing their feet with water. Through water, the scriptures reveal to us time and again that we have received life from God and have done so abundantly. In one of my favorite lines in scripture, Jesus tells us in the sermon on the mount, "God sends the rain on the just "and the unjust." Or to put it another way, God's grace is unbounded. There's more than enough life to go around and all will be included as recipients of it. Yet, the idea fo abundance, especially of a good thing, is difficult somehow for us to wrap our minds around. We assume that scarcity, rather than abundance, will be the bottom line because that's what our human viewpoint tells us. Put yourselves in the shoes of the Israelites, in today's lesson, for instance, and try to imagine their long journey across the arid wilderness. Yes, God had liberated them from the bonds of slavery in Egypt. But now, they were discovering that freedom had its challenges, too. You see, because of their hasty departure from Egypt, they had no time to prepare for their journey to the promised land. Food and water, life's basic essentials, God would have to provide. But where would it come form? Would there be enough to around for everybody? Could God really be trusted? Indeed, in the chapter preceding today's reading, we first hear the Israelites murmuring against Moses. "If only we had died by the hand of the Lord "in the land of Egypt when we sat by the flesh pots "and ate our fill of bread, "for you have brought us out into this wilderness "to kill the whole assembly with hunger." Yahweh, being a merciful God, hears their cry for help and delivers quail and manna to feed them. But even then, after all that God had done for them, the faith of the Israelites soon grew weak. Within only a few verses, the people are railing

against Moses once again. "Why did you bring us out of Egypt to kill us "and our children and livestock with thirst?" Once again, the Lord provided in his own miraculous, trustworthy way, this time with water spewing forth from a rock. For those who would ask, "Is God among us or not?", the answer was definitively delivered in a torrent of water. Our gospel account highlights a different kind of water, living water, as Jesus describes it. This dramatic story points not toward human arrogance in the face of God's love, as in the story from Exodus, but toward the completeness and the inclusiveness of God's love through Christ. Jesus is traveling through Samaria and in chosen to do so turns away from the people and the places of official Judaism, where he began his ministry to be with the Jews most hated enemies, the Samaritans. In this encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well, we find a striking contrast with everything that has preceded it in the gospel. You may recall from Dean Campbell's sermon last week that the third chapter of John tells us that Jesus speaks with Nicodemus, a male member of the Jewish religious establishment. In today's text, in John four, he speaks with a female member of an enemy people. Whereas Nicodemus has a name and a reputation, this woman is nameless. She is simply a Samaritan woman, thus this conversation between Jesus and the woman, though it is the longest he has with anyone in any of the gospels, is also among the most scandalous. And it is scandal the woman herself takes note of. When Jesus requests of her, "Give me a drink," she questions him forthrightly. "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink, of me?" Read between the lines. "What kind of a Jew are you, anyway?" The Jews had endless rules about what they could and could not eat or drink and she knew that included not eating or drinking from the vessel of a non-Jew, considered to be ritually unclean. Secondly, she was woman and you've heard what it was like for women in those days. Second class is hardly adequate to describe their status. They were not allowed to worship with men where devotions included the prayer, "Thank God I'm not a woman." Neither was a man supposed to speak with a woman in public, including his own wife. And for a rabbi to discuss theology with a woman? Well, it was so extraordinary as to be unimaginable. On top that, we can surmise that she was a fallen woman. You see, the respectable women of the town made their trips to Jacob's well either in the cool of the morning or the evening when they could greet one another and catch up on the news. But this woman would have been one of the ones they talked about. As Jesus eventually deduced, she had been married five times and was living in sin at the time. Thus, the woman came for her water at noon, alone, no doubt, where it must have been less painful for her to endure the scorching heat of the sun than the searing glares of the others who came to well. Into this unlikely conversation, Jesus introduces this topic of living water. "Everyone who drinks this water," meaning the well water, "will be thirsty again. "But those who drink of the water "that I will give them will never be thirsty. "It will become in them a spring of water, "gushing up to eternal life." Sounds good to me, she must have thought, hardly knowing what to make of it. "Sir," she says with a twinkle in her eye, "Give me this water, "so that I will never be thirsty again, "or have to come here to draw it." But little did she know what she was really asking. Abruptly, Jesus changes the subject. "Go get your husband and come back here," he tells her. The tension builds as she stops dead in her tracks to consider her response to this curveball he has just thrown to her. Should the woman be angry that Jesus is suddenly getting so personal? Should she be dishonest because she doesn't want to admit to her current state of affairs? Should she be annoyed that business as usual has been intruded upon? She musters up her remaining shred of dignity and looks Jesus right in the eye. "I have no husband." Jesus replies, "You are right in saying, "'I have no husband,' "for you have had five husbands "and the one you have now is not your husband. "What you have said is true." It's no time for playing games. Jesus tells it like it is. Yet, at the same time refrains from judging her. Rather than distancing himself from her because of her past, Jesus

draws closer to her. This sudden intimacy and unexplainable knowledge Jesus has of the woman is a little unsettling to her, as you can imagine. She begins to realize, this man truly knows her. If he knows all of this about me already, what else could he know? She then provides her own change of pace by switching the subject to religion, which is a move that can be interpreted in one of two ways. Some commentators have suggested this was her psychological ploy, an attempt to evade the embarrassment of discussing her morals by changing the subject in a hurry. Why not hide behind the formalities of a discussion about religion? Perhaps some of you have tried that before. And it works pretty well, doesn't it? I prefer to think of her response, however, as a sign of her interest in a serious theological discussion. Catching her breath that this conversation is even happening in the first place, she steps forward to engage Jesus at another level. "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. "Then tell me this, "where's the proper place to worship God?" If Jesus can ask hard questions, so can she. Yet it was not an unreasonable question to ask. For among the many issues which caused such bitter feelings between Jews and Samaritans, this had been the greatest. Who had the most direct access to God? was the question at stake. You see, the Samaritans had built a shrine on Mount Gerizim to stand in direct competition with the temple in Jerusalem. And it was eventually destroyed by the Jews. Touchy as the subject was, if a Jew and a Samaritan were going to discuss their real differences, this was the subject to go for. Jesus' answer wasn't like anything she could have expected. He implied that true worship would transcend both Jerusalem and Gerizim. God's grace was available to all and all were invited to worship together in spirit and truth, both the chosen and the rejected people, both the male and the female. These were the ones God was actually seeking, children of God who would receive the spirit that would enable them to transcend earthly institutions and worship God with sincere hearts. Could it be that Jesus was seeking her out? An outsider on not one, not two, but three accounts, to receive this spirit, this living water? By the end of the conversation, she confesses, "I know the Messiah is coming." And Jesus replies, "I am he." I wonder, if by that point, she hadn't already suspected it. About that time, the disciples returned from their grocery run and were they ever surprised, not that Jesus was talking to a Samaritan, but that he was talking with a woman. But you notice, no one dared to ask "What's going on here?" or "Why are you speaking with her?" They could feel the electricity in the air. This conversation between Jesus and this Samaritan woman might have begun about a drink of water, but it concluded with a revelation about who they both were. She as no longer simply a Samaritan woman, but a child of God. He no longer, a tired and thirsty Jewish stranger, but the true Messiah. In an essay about this text, Barbara Brown Taylor writes that by telling the woman who she is, Jesus shows her who he is. The Messiah is the one in whose presence you know who you really are, the good and the bad of it, the all of it, the hope in it. Now, often times, this isn't the kind of information that we really want to find out, that is who we really are underneath the stereotypes, the superficialities, the projections of others. Yet, for the Samaritan woman, the freedom and blessing that Jesus bestowed upon her by enabling her to reveal her true self to him was an empowering experience. Suddenly, she was transformed from outcast to evangelist. She was proclaiming to people she thought she could never face again. "Come and see a man who had told me "everything I have ever done." She no longer had to bow down under the weight of her shame and humiliation. Thanks to Jesus' acceptance of her as a person, including her past, her race, and her gender, she could rise above the walls, which had enclosed her for so long to courageously and convincingly share the good news with others. As the gospel tells us, many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony. Though this story comes to us from another time and very distant place, it still seems relevant to me today. I talk to people every week who are searching for living water, though they may call it something else. Many of us are spiritually dry, not

only the outsiders, but the insiders as well. Within the church I hear of increased interest and meditation, retreats, spiritual directions, even angels. Outside the church, I hear about the demands for astrologers, crystal healers, massage therapists, gurus of any sort. Masses of people are flocking to new age spirituality in search of remedies for loneliness or meaninglessness or emptiness pervading their lives. Though I'm not always sympathetic to the means, I am certainly sympathetic to the quest. Our souls are always thirsting for God, according to the psalmist, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. It's just that sometimes we don't know where to turn to find it. Last summer, I was fortunate to be able to spend a few days with a Benedictine community at their monastery in northern New Mexico. And during that time, I participated in daily offices lead by the brothers with a number of other visitors. It became clear to me that not everyone at those services was familiar with the liturgy, perhaps not all were Christian. A few may have even been clinging to their crystals during worship. Yet, I was struck by the incredible warmth and vitality of that community and the way the brothers welcomed us into their midst without any judgment, without any agenda, other than praising God together. The monastery itself was located in a high mountain desert area, so arid that wet clothes on the clothesline needed only a few minutes in the sun to dry. But it wasn't the kind of place to be reminded of one's thirst. Rather, it was a place to drink deeply of something life-giving, which the brothers shared so freely. It seemed as if that small community had enough love to spread amongst all of us that they could spread it around the world and still have plenty left to share. Isn't that the way living water is really supposed to work? The Samaritan woman bears witness to the fact that even the most estranged among us can receive the gift of living water. Christ alone has the power to reveal the truth to us about ourselves, yet we must respond to his outstretched hand. What would have happened to the woman if she had been unreceptive to Jesus' initial request? What if she had been unwilling to admit the truth to herself and to Jesus as so many of us struggle to do? Just as Jesus stepped forward to reveal himself to her, she had to trust enough to reveal herself to him. In this process, she acknowledged her simpleness but also reclaimed her humanity. There was good and there was bad within her, but in the end, there was hope. For the church, the waters of baptism represent that hope. When we baptize, we do so not only with water that cleanses and renews us, but with the Holy Spirit who nurtures and sustains us. Long after the water itself has been dried from our heads, the Spirit abides with us, empowering us, encouraging us, enlivening us, enlivening us to live in the way of Christ. This is the living water that sustains us through the driest and weariest days. This is the promise that God stands by even during 40 years in the desert, no matter who you are, no matter where you're from. Is your soul parched from thirst? Is your spirit longing for a place to find acceptance? Come to well spring of life and receive God's gift of living water. It is yours for the asking. (dramatic organ music) (all singing)

Debra: You may be seated. The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And also with you.

- Let us pray. O Lord Christ, the scriptures tell us that you reached out to a Samaritan woman, inviting her into a relationship with you in spite of all the religious, cultural, and social barriers of your day. We have heard that you looked at her and knew everything about her, yet still you accepted her and loved her. Give us courage, Lord, to come to the well, to see for ourselves. Lord, in your mercy,

All: hear our prayer.

- The Samaritans in the village first went to the well on the testimony of the woman. But they soon came to believe, because of what they had seen and heard firsthand. Lord, the scriptures, the stories of our faith, have lead us to come to the well to find out for ourselves whether you are indeed the Messiah. Are you the one who offers water that satisfies our thirst? The Lord Christ, speak to us that we might experience you firsthand and drink deeply of your well and truly know that you are the savior of the world. Lord, in your mercy,

All: her our prayer.

- O Holy One of the piercing eyes, it is a frightening thing to have you look so deeply within us. Truly, you do know everything about us. You know what our hopes and our fears are. You know the ways we've been caring and the ways we've been cruel. You know how we've tried to fill our lives with all sorts of things and how nothing we've sought has satisfied our deep thirst. You know our weaknesses and sins, but you look at us only with eyes of compassion. You see our deepest wounds that we would keep hidden from all the world, but yet you reach out to us with healing love. O Lord, give us the courage to accept what you offer, so that we might drink deeply from your well of living water. Lord, in your mercy,

All: hear our prayer.

- O God who calls us to worship in spirit and in truth, empower us to become like the disciples and the Samaritan woman who didn't keep your gifts for themselves, but who went out to share the good news of your grace with others. Give us strength to proclaim the good news of salvation to all those who do not yet know you so that they, too, may go to the well of living water to discover you for themselves. Lord, in your mercy,

All: hear our prayer.

- You are a God of mercy and compassion. And you call us to be a people whose ways are merciful and compassionate. Indeed, you've called us to be brother and sister to one another. Show us those in our midst whom we can help, that they might experience your living water. Lord, in your mercy,

All: hear our prayer.

- Lord, we know that there are things we cannot change alone. Help us to do our part, and yet, also trust you to accomplish what we cannot do. Receive into your care those whom we name in our hearts. Extend your hand of healing to the sick, your peace to those who are troubled and at war, and your strength to those who are weak. Lord, in your mercy,

All: hear our prayer.

- Grant what we ask, for we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord who is the abundant fountain of life which puts an end to all our need, amen. Often we have come to well of God's love and there has been living water to quench our thirst. Sometimes we've needed others to draw the water for us and sometimes it is we who offer it to them. The world is full of thirsty people. Through our offerings, we provide wells and water carriers and the assurance of God's love in the place where we are and far beyond our own reach. Let us give our tithes and offerings generously. (soft organ music) (James singing soprano softly) (choir singing softly) (James singing strong soprano) (soft organ music) (heavy organ music) (all singing) What joy there can be, loving God, in the giving and receiving of cool, refreshing water. Thank you for the living water that we have received from Christ and are privileged to share. Bless the resources gathered today to sustain the programs and outreach of this chapel and the congregation. May these gifts of our words and our deeds and our sustenance make an effective witness to Jesus Christ, savior of the world, who taught us to pray together saying,

All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, they will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever, amen. (solemn organ music) (choir singing) (intensified organ music) (intensified choir singing)

Debra: Go in peace. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you and keep you, amen. (soft piano music) (angelic choir singing) ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ (energetic organ music)