

Sunday, March 15  
(the first online SPR service, organized with  
just two days' notice)

These are extremely strange times. If you are at watching us worship together on a screen in your house, you know that already. It's strange to worship in a mostly empty church. It's strange to put posters on the church doors that say 'This building is temporarily closed for everyone's health and safety.

The readings for today seem almost a little bit too on the nose. Moses' people are worried about getting their basic needs met—in a panic about access to water. At a time when so many of us are going to the grocery store and finding empty shelves, the Samaritan woman most notably is there in the middle of the day, alone, gathering water. It wasn't supposed to be a solitary activity for women. Most times women all went to the well at the same time. They helped each other carry water. They traded gossip. They watched each other's children. But she's all alone.

At a time when we are told that, if you are at greater risk, maybe you can go to the grocery store at 10:00 PM when no one else will be there; that maybe instead of seeing your friends and the people you love at church you could stay home and watch worship: honest, these are strange times. But God does not desert the Israelites. God does not desert the Samaritan. Even in this time of fear and isolation God will absolutely not desert us. Just as Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that he is sent to complete the work that God is doing, we are also sent and mobilized by God in the world to help complete the work that God is already trying to do.

God is working with us as we work to keep each other safe. God is working with us as we think about who might be feeling especially isolated, especially lonely. afraid to leave the house, or just bored and wishing that a friend would call. Maybe we offer to pick up their

prescription; or take their pet to the vet. Even in dangerous times, even in times of great, great fear (and I assure you the Israelites wandering in the desert knew a lot about fear), God is still present. Something that we can be doing to work together with God for the healing of the world can be as small as washing your hands; can be as large as volunteering yourself to help out at our Wednesday food pantry so that a regular volunteer who might be immune-compromised can stay home. There is always something that we can do. There is always something that God is doing.

So whatever this time has been like for you—and it's been weird for all of us, scary for all of us—do not lose heart. Remember that Jesus comes to the Samaritan woman when she is all alone. When she is feeling vulnerable and isolated, he is there for her. He shows up. He will keep showing up. With God's help, we can keep showing up for each other.

Catherine Healy