
Sunday of the Samaritan Woman – 2020

Acts 11:19-26;29-30 & John 4:5-43

The Gospel for this Sunday is about the woman at Jacob's well, known as the Samaritan Woman. She offers us an example of enlightenment. She knew this Messiah was not an abstract idea but a real person and a teacher, not a military conqueror. She seemed to clearly understand Christ better than even some of His disciples!

The encounter with the Samaritan women began when the Lord and His followers entered the city of Sychar in Samaria, near Mount Gerizim. This city was about forty miles north of Jerusalem. Christ and His apostles stopped at Jacob's Well for a drink. This well was, and still is venerated by Jews and Christians to this day. The spring here was contained in a cistern created by the Old Testament Patriarch Jacob.

It was evening and the Savior, in His human nature, was tired, hungry, and thirsty. So, He sat down at the well. His followers went into the town to see what they could find to eat. While they were gone, a Samaritan woman arrived to draw water and the Lord asked her for a drink.

Our Gospel reading does not give us the name of the Samaritan woman. But Holy Tradition of the Church remembers, and calls her in Greek - Photini, in Russian - Svetlana, in the Celtic languages - Fiona, in Western languages - Clair. All these names speak of light.

The Samaritan woman came to the well with no spiritual purpose. She came, as always, to fetch water. This is where she first met Christ. Because the Samaritan woman asked a question of Christ, His response enlightened her in such a way she recognized Him as a Prophet, and later, as Christ, the Savior of the world.

Jesus then offered her living water. This surprised her because Jews would have nothing to do with the Samaritans. And here He was, talking with her and accepting her despite her background.

Now, "living water" is an interesting term. The Savior meant a "water" that gives life". There is a considerable amount of important information packed into His response. First, the Lord speaks of a gift, something you cannot earn. Then, He makes it clear that He is the only one who can give this gift. And the gift itself leads to eternal life and union with God for those who are otherwise dead in sin, as was this woman.

We might compare this scenario to agriculture. Those who are gardeners know that every plant needs water to grow. They also know that plants in dry soil struggle the hardest to survive, and without water they wither. Their leaves curl, and the plant looks like it is dying. They need more water than those who are in damp ground and whose leaves are rich and full of moisture.

Dry plants respond better to water than they do to added heat. These plants send down their roots to where they can find water or turn their leaves over to better receive it. When watered, they change, look better and continue to grow. Soon they produce the fruit as intended.

After her conversation with Jesus at the well, the Samaritan Woman, drank plentifully and inherited the Heavenly Kingdom as one blessed forever. We too, are the plants in God's garden. We are placed here for a reason and a purpose. Some of us may be awfully dry, but some of us are not. But each one of us, whether we are dry or moist at this very moment, needs the living

water Jesus says He offers. The water He gives is that which wells up to eternal life. The water He gives overflows and brings life to other plants nearby. Plants will then produce the fruit God expects of us. This fruit we produce lead to everlasting life.

So, the Samaritan woman in our Gospel, teaches us all to be open at every moment of life, while we are busy with the simplest things. When we receive the Divine word, we are illumined by the Divine Light, and cleansed by His purity. We need to receive it in the depths of our souls, with all our life, so people seeing what we have may believe that the Light has come into the world.

It is only through seeing our deeds, through seeing how we live that people can believe that the light is God's Light; it is not in our words, unless they are words of truth and power like those of the Holy Apostles, or of Christ Himself. And let us reflect, each of us, on how we can become what we are called.

In both Scripture and the Fathers, the Holy Spirit is called both water and, sometimes, fire. In the water of Holy Baptism, for example, the Holy Spirit washes the sinner clean. When the Spirit is described as fire, it reminds us that fire burns sin away and warms a person. In the conversation at Jacob's Well, the Lord used the image of the Holy Spirit as Living Water.

Let not a single moment of our life be spent outside the light, love and joy of God's presence and not a moment without the entire surrender of self as a vessel filled of His Holy Spirit and love."

This Samaritan woman can teach us, guide us, bring us to Christ in the way she came, and serve Him her way. She brought salvation of all who were around her. May we do the same!

Amen!