

**FIFTH SUNDAY OF PASCHA (SUNDAY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN)
APRIL 23/MAY 6, 2007**

ACTS 11: 19-26, 29-30

ST. JOHN 4: 5-42

by

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Gospel: *Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship*

him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he. And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her? The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto him. In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours. And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his own word; And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

Traveling

The Gospel begins today with the Lord departing, which is an example for our benefit. He had knowledge that the Pharisees had heard of His fame, and He knew they would be envious. So Christ left for Galilee. This teaches us two things:

First, that we should spare our enemies and try every means not to give cause for offense or envy; and second, that we should not throw ourselves into temptation foolishly and needlessly, but instead withdraw for a while until the anger of our enemies has abated.¹

Christ was not personally baptising, but he was being falsely accused “by envious men who wished to stir up the Pharisees against Him”.²

Jacob's Well, Jesus, the Samaritan Woman & Living Water

We learn a lot about Our Saviour simply by observing his behaviour in the midst of being worn out from His journey as He came into Samaria and stopped at the well. He wasn't riding an elegant steed or even a lowly donkey. He simply walked. This act shows us His humility and simplicity, and by it He teaches us "to need less, not more". He also didn't have a chair to sit upon. He just sat down on the ground near Jacob's Well. He sat in that place near the well because He was tired and thirsty.

It was the sixth hour, about high noon, and we can visualise the oppressive heat coming down on Him. His disciples had gone into the city to buy food. He needed a drink, so He asked the Samaritan woman for one.

She was curious about this. After all, Jews considered Samaritans as an abomination. She decided by His overall appearance the Lord was a Jew. Jews did not deal with Samaritans. She was concerned about Him in relation to her. Due to her concern that He was doing something unlawful, she tried to correct Him!³

Living Water

Christ does not let her know who He is until her good qualities (virtue, prudence, and conscientiousness) have been revealed. He then begins to speak to her of more profound spiritual things:

If thou knewest the Gift of God, and Who it is that saith to thee,
Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and he would
have given thee *living water* (emphasis supplied).⁴

If she had known what wonderful gifts God gives and that the tired stranger was God, she

would have asked for and received living water. The Lord calls the gift of the Holy Spirit water because it cleanses and refreshes those who receive it. It is not stagnant, fetid water like that in ponds and wells, but *living water*, ceaselessly bubbling and gushing upwards. For the grace of the Holy Spirit makes the soul constantly active in doing good, and always ready for spiritual ascents.⁵

Those drinking from Jacob's Well will thirst again, but not so with those drinking from Christ's living water. The latter never thirst again. They will have eternal life. A more comprehensive explanation of Living Water (the grace of the Holy Spirit) is:

Living water Christ called the water of His teaching. He calls it water, because, like water, it cleanses the filth of sin, and extinguishes the flame of the passions, and heals the arid barrenness of unbelief. It is living water, because it is ever-existing and ever-flowing; the life of water lies in being poured out and in flowing. Living water is the grace of the Holy Spirit, which

is called by divers names according to the diversity of its operations. Here it is called water, but sometimes (it is called) fire. It is (called) water, because like water it descends from heaven, gives life and nourishes. Though in appearance it is all the same, in its effects it is varied. It makes some flowers white, others dark; some it colours scarlet, others crimson. It makes the fig tree sweet, while it makes bitter the wormwood. In like manner, the Divine Spirit, descending from heaven, quickens and nourishes souls. Though He is One, He divides His grace and power for various effects. The Holy Spirit is further called fire, because like fire He is One in appearance, but acts in various ways, warming and burning, enlightening and cleansing. So does the grace of the Holy Spirit enlighten the faithful and bestow great goodness of soul upon them that *receive* (emphasis supplied). He ever moves the soul to good deeds and ever adds to its ascent (in virtue).⁶

The Samaritan Woman Asks for the Water

Her perception of Him changed as their encounter continued. She began to realise He was a different man than she had thought. She reverently calls Him “Sir;” however, at that time she did not see the significance of His living water. She doesn’t understand it yet as Christ means it. But she does now consider Christ’s to trump Jacob’s Well water.

Jesus asked her to get her husband, and she replied she didn’t have one. Of course, He, being the Lord, knew otherwise. He didn’t scold her when he brought forth the fact that she had five husbands and the one she now had was not her husband. The Lord revealed His prophetic power when he disclosed His knowledge of her past. She didn’t talk back or disagree with Him. Nor did she run away in shame. She marveled at His prophetic powers, and her soul’s interest in Divine doctrines, wisdom and virtue continued unabated.⁷

True Worshippers in Spirit and Truth

She had begun to even ask dogmatic questions – quite a development in a brief encounter! Now the Samaritans believed that God was limited to one place. Christ tells her that the time is coming “when God will be worshiped neither here nor in Jerusalem”.⁸ Change is at the door, places and manner of worship will not be the same, and the days of the Prophets are coming to a close:

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the *true worshippers* (emphasis supplied) shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: For the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.⁹

The true worshippers, who are they? They must worship the Father in spirit and truth. Bl. Theophylact explains:

By *true worshippers* the Lord means those who live according to His own law, who do not confine God to one place, as do the Samaritans, and who do not serve Him with a material, bodily worship, as do the Jews, but who worship Him in spirit and in truth, that is, *with their soul and with purity of mind [nous]* (emphasis supplied). Because God is spirit, that is, bodiless, He must be worshipped in a bodiless manner which is in accordance with the soul. This is what it means to worship *in spirit*, for the soul is both spirit and bodiless. But because there are many who appear to worship Him in accordance with the soul, but do not hold to the Orthodox doctrine concerning Him, such as the heretics, he also added the words, *and in truth*. For one must both worship God with the mind [nous], and hold to the true doctrine concerning Him.¹⁰

True worshippers will not have any geographical limitation. They worship “in mind and soul” (in spirit) and not as the Jews with their “types and foreshadowings” because the latter are about to come to an end. God seeks worshippers who are “spiritual, because He is Spirit, and true, because He is Truth”.¹¹

The Lord Reveals Himself

The Samaritan woman said to Christ “I know that the Messiah cometh, who is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things.” Where did she get this spiritual knowledge? How did she know that the Messiah is coming and His name is Christ? She was a Samaritan, and they followed the writings of Moses, the five books of Moses. The Samaritans knew the prophecies about Christ, including that He is the Son of God, from these books:

From these they knew the prophecies about Christ, and that He is the Son of God. For the words, *Let us make man*, [Gen. 1: 26] indicate that the Father was speaking to the Son; it was the Son Who spoke with Abraham in his tent; and Jacob spoke these prophetic words concerning the Son, *A ruler shall not fall from Judah... until there come the things stored up for Him, and He is the Expectation of the Nations*. [Gen. 49: 10] Moses himself said, *The Lord thy God shall raise up to thee a prophet of thy brethren, like me; Him shall ye hear*. [Dt. 18: 15] And many other things were proclaimed concerning the coming of the Christ. This is how the woman can say, *I know that the Messiah cometh*.¹²

The circumstances ripen! She has been led through a step by step process toward remembering that the Messiah is expected. Christ then reveals Himself to her. The Jews were continually trying to get him to state that He is the Christ. He hadn't revealed Himself to them because their motives were suspicious. He reveals to her that He is the Christ because of her honesty. When she heard His words, she immediately believed them leaving her waterpot and going into the city where she said to the men: "Come, see a man, who told me all things I ever did: is not this the Christ?":

Now she becomes no less than an *Apostle* (emphasis supplied), ordained to this rank by the faith that has taken hold of her heart, teaching an entire city and drawing it to Christ. *Come*, she says, *see a man, who told me all things I ever did*. Once her soul was inflamed with divine fire, she gave no thought to anything earthly, not even shame or dishonour.¹³

Please note that she used discretion in her words to the men. She didn't flatly state that He is the Christ. By phrasing it in the manner "is not this the Christ?," she wants them to come to their own decision in support of her belief in Him. Once her soul was on fire for the Lord, she disregarded any concern for what was of this earthly world; she thought only of what was *not of this world!*

Her spiritual example shines for us. Let us heed it as our guiding light!

The Disciples Arrive

When the Lord had finished teaching the Samaritan woman, the Disciples returned. They were quite taken back that He had been discussing things with her. He was humble and meek and showed her compassion, and she not only was a woman, but also a Samaritan and pauper.¹⁴ They didn't ask Him what He was discussing with her, since it did not appear to involve themselves.¹⁵

They saw that their Lord was weary and tired and urged Him to eat out of their love for Him. Yet he didn't need the kind of food they meant. Christ's food is "knowing that the Samaritan woman was about to bring to Him nearly all the inhabitants of the city, and that the Samaritans would believe in Him". This is the meaning of His comment to the disciples "My food is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work".¹⁶

His 'eating' is the Samaritans' salvation and renewal:

The prophets and the law were not able to complete the work of God because they themselves were imperfect and incomplete, able to reveal only types and foreshadowings of the good things to come. But the Lord completed God's work, which is, our salvation and our renewal.¹⁷

The Prophets and the law in the Old Testament provided a rough foundation upon which Christ built the Christian Church.

The New And Brighter Light!

The Old Testament is not countermanded by the New, but the Truths in the New Testament are deeper, purer, clearer and highlight the spiritual nature of the Divinity. The New Adam shines with a new, more profound light than the religion of Israel:

Although not everything is new in the New Testament or Christian religion in comparison with the religion of the Old Testament, nevertheless, even that which is taken by Christianity from the religion of Israel *shines with the new light of a more profound and perfected meaning* (emphasis supplied).

Even though there are in both Old and New Testaments general dogmatic truths (of the unity of the divine Being, his fall, and others), nevertheless, these truths, too, in the New Testament are presented more clearly, purely, deeply and spiritually and are more free from elements of anthropomorphism, which in the Old Testament, veils the idea of the spiritual nature of the divine being. The words of Christ that *God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth* [St. John 4: 24], would be impossible to find in the Old Testament.¹⁸

Christ completed His Father's work, our salvation and renewal. God made man and the New Adam perfected him. The law is also the work of God, and the Lord did not reject the law; rather, He completed it in Himself [Ro. 10: 4]

Christ Often Speaks in Parable

The Lord speaks in parables many times to keep the listeners' attention focused and stimulate them to ask questions in order to spiritually learn the true meaning behind the veil of the riddle. In the latter part of today's Gospel, the disciples are his subject matter. He concentrates on emphasising that man's salvation is "food". He teaches the disciples to pay less attention to bodily requirements and "redirect their hunger to the saving of men". In the parable, He points out that the noetic (spiritual) harvest is right before one's eyes. Just lift them up. He is speaking about the Samaritans who were at that time approaching Him. All the disciples (and ourselves) need to do is recognise these eager souls who are ready to believe. "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are **white already to harvest** (emphasis in **bold** supplied)." ¹⁹

The Old Testament prophets cultivated and prepared the spiritual harvest for the Apostles to reap. The prophets sow and the Apostles reap: Per St. John Chrysostom:

Who is the one who sows and the one who reaps? The prophets are they that sowed, though they reaped not, but the apostles.... Now harvesting is not the same as sowing. 'I have kept you for that in which the toil is less and the pleasure greater, and not for sowing because there is much hard labour and pain. In harvesting the return is large, the toil and pain not so great; indeed, there is much that is easy.... The very difficult work that required much

labour was the putting in of the seed, and introducing the uninitiated soul to the knowledge of God.... It was the wish of the prophets to bring all men to Me.’ This also the law was preparing. On this account did they sow, that they might produce this fruit. By all this He shows that He sent them forth also, and great is the kinship between the new and old; and all this He furnishes at once by this parable.²⁰

Even though the New Testament completes God’s work, the Old Testament and the New are not separated. Had they been so, the Apostles couldn’t reap their harvest.

No Miracles Were Necessary – By His Presence Did They believe In Him!

Many of the Samaritans believed in Him due to the woman’s testimony which involved disclosing her past. They figured that the Man she proclaimed must be “truly great and extraordinary” for her to do that. So, “showing their faith by their works, they asked Him to live with them always”. Tarry meant to “make one’s home” there with them. However, he stayed there only two days. During that time, many others came to believe in Him because of His teaching. They called Him the Saviour of the world.²¹

Note that the Samaritans believed in Him without any demonstration of miracles:

By His mere presence among the Samaritans, the Lord is also teaching something more profound – without any sign or miracle, they believed and begged Him to live with them. But the Jews, when given ten thousand signs and miracles, drove Him away, for *those in his house shall be all a man’s enemies.*²² [Micah 7: 6]

Whew! There is a lot of soul in the Gospel for today! A lot more could have been said, but I had to cut it off somewhere. It is chockfull of remarkable spirituality. Christ’s humility, again, shines through. His humility should be our beacon of light. If one word is indispensable to True Christianity, this is it! Let’s emulate Him in our personal lives both at work, with other neighbours (considering everyone as our neighbour) and at home.

Jesus lived simply, no frills. Compare His austere style of living with some modern-day Protestant preachers who dress in \$1000 to \$2000 dollar suits with flashy ties, expensive watches and live in mansions. In Orthodoxy, the same emphasis on the external can be seen in some hierarchs’ penchant for the most expensive vestments and their drive for numbers of parishioners and wealth. Their heretical movements for alliances with the Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans and others violate The Creed. Steer clear of these folk if they are preaching heresy openly. No hierarch who preaches ecumenism is a bishop of the True Orthodox Church. He is just a pseudo-bishop, you must disobey:

... But as for those persons, on the other hand, who, on account of some heresy condemned by holy Councils, or Fathers, withdrawing themselves from communion with their president, who, that is to say, is preaching the heresy publicly, and teaching it barehead in church, such persons not only are not subject to any canonical penalty on account of their having walled themselves off from any and all communion with the one called a Bishop before any conciliar or synodal verdict has been rendered, but, on the contrary, they shall be deemed worthy to enjoy the honor which befits them among Orthodox Christians. For they have defied, not Bishops, but pseudo-bishops and pseudo-teachers; and they have not sundered the union of the Church with any schism, but, on the contrary, have been sedulous to rescue the Church from schisms and divisions.

[*Canons of the Regional Synods, First-Second Council, c. 15.*]

You might have heard the fiction that a Council must be held before you can “wall yourselves” off and discontinue communion with the bishop openly preaching heresy. This is not true. You have a right (and duty) to separate yourselves and discontinue communion with such a person immediately. You will not be considered in schism; in fact, you will be honoured as protecting the True Church from schism and heresy:

If, however, the said presidents are heretics, and are preaching their heresy openly, and on this account those subject to them separate themselves, and even though it be before there has been any conciliar or synodal trial concerning the heresy, but are even deemed to deserve fitting honor as Orthodox Christians, since not only have they caused no schism in the Church on account of their separation, but have rather freed the Church from the schism and heresy of their pseudo-bishops.

[*id.*, c. 15, Interpretation]

...

The Orthodox people must become conscious of the fact that they owe no obedience to a bishop, no matter how high a title he holds, when that bishop ceases being Orthodox and openly follows heretics with pretences of union ‘on equal terms.’ On the contrary, they are *obliged* (emphasis supplied) to depart from him and confess their Faith, because a bishop, even if he be patriarch or pope, ceases from being a bishop the moment he ceases being Orthodox. The bishop is a consecrated person, and even if he is openly sinful, respect and honour is due him until synodically censured. But if he becomes *openly heretical or is in communion with heretics*, (both emphases supplied), then the Christians should

not await any synodical decision, but *should draw away from him immediately* (emphasis supplied).

[Dr. Alexandre Kalomiros, *Against False Union*, (tr. From the Greek by George Gabriel), Second Edition, 1978, Revised Appendix, 2000, St. Nectarios Press, Seattle, Washington, p. 61.]

Notice how contemporary television stresses your appearance, your external self. Multitudes of fancy products are manufactured to prey on our vanities, catering to our fetishes, emphasizing how we look on the outside to others. They are living for today. Let's keep our lives simple and remember we are living for what is *not* of this world! It is not how we look externally to others that counts. It is how we are in the heart. What kind of person are we inwardly? Do we live according to Christ's Commandments and spiritual teachings? Are we making a good faith attempt to do so? We are to worship God in spirit and in truth: "For one must **both** (emphasis supplied) worship God with the mind [*nous*], and hold to the *true doctrine* (emphasis supplied) concerning Him."²³

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

¹ Bl. Theophylact's *Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to Saint John* (in the process of being translated from the original Greek by Fr. Christopher Stade, expected publication date is 2007 by Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO); see this Scripture sample commentary at http://www.chrysostompress.org/explanation/pascha_5, p. 1 of 8.

² *ibid.*

³ *id.*, p. 2.

⁴ *id.*,

⁵ *id.*

⁶ Hieromonk German Ciuba, (tr. from the Slavonic into English; tr. from the Greek into Slavonic in the year 6851, A.D. 1343), *The Gospel Commentary*, Russian Orthodox Church of the Nativity of Christ (Old Rite), Erie, PA, 2002, p. 571.

⁷ Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, pp.2-3.

⁸ "In uttering these words, the Lord foretells the destruction of Samaria as well as of Jerusalem, which they suffered when they were uprooted by the Romans after the death of Christ." *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, p.203.

⁹ Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

¹⁰ *id.*

¹¹ *id.*

¹² *id.*, pp. 4-5.

¹³ *id.*, p. 5.

¹⁴ *id.*

¹⁵ *id.*

¹⁶ *id.*, p. 6.

¹⁷ *id.*

¹⁸ I.M. Andreyev (Catacomb Theologian) (biography of the author by Fr. Seraphim Rose), *Orthodox Apologetic Theology*, St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, (St. Paisius Missionary School), Platina, California, 1995, p. 160.

¹⁹ Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.

²⁰ *The Orthodox New Testament, The Holy Gospels Volume 1*, Holy Apostles Convent/Dormition Skete, Buena Vista, CO, 2000, St. John, Endnotes, #97, 4: 37, 38, p. 494.

²¹ Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

²² *id.*

²³ *id.*, p. 4.