

Clearing Obstacles

Christ is Risen! On this 4th Sunday after Holy Pascha, we are brought to Samaria, the site of Jacob's Well, where our Saviour engages a woman with a soul-saving conversation (John 4: 5-42):

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.

Nothing depicted in Holy Scripture is random occurrence. Our Saviour intended to meet the Samaritan woman at the well. The Knower of all hearts and minds was fully cognizant of the life and history of the Samaritan woman, appreciating that, despite her sinfulness, she had a genuine thirst for truth. The conversation defied convention, as talking to Samaritans, especially women, was prohibited for Jews. But our Saviour had a clear mission, to correct the life of this woman, through enlightenment, which is a demonstrable act of Godly patience, love and divine condescension.

Our Saviour patiently and masterfully draws and cultivates the woman's interest. She, in turn, demonstrates a receptivity and respect that is a striking contrast to the indignant Scribes and Pharisees, who were vehement in their rejection of Christ. Once the woman develops and expresses a committed interest, (as our Saviour knew full well of her sincerity), saying "Sir, give me this water...", our Saviour saw an impediment to further progress... that of unrepentant sins.

Christ then instructed her, "Go, call thy husband." On the surface, this appears to be a peculiar request, given the fact that our Saviour clearly knows about her extramarital living situation. Why did our Saviour instruct her so? To draw her into a state of soul-saving repentance. The Samaritan woman's response was not evasive or untruthful, it was direct and honest. That set the groundwork for the reception of a great blessing... a revelation! Our Lord revealed His Divine knowledge of her living situation and her life! Christ knew that she needed such a revelation to have her life turned around, and receive enlightenment after she repented of her sins. Clearly, she was a changed woman! ...Forgetting her water pot, running to her townspeople and, in apostolic fashion, she zealously and shamelessly proclaimed to all the arrival of our Saviour!

How loving and patient is our Lord! He condescends to our weaknesses, and points us to the way of spiritual recovery, through holy repentance. The Samaritan woman was later baptized and given the name of Photini, the “enlightened one”.

Many have a thirst for truth, a genuine zeal for Christ and a desire to come closer to God. But spiritual advancement and progress is impeded by unrepented sins. As we are called and nurtured to traverse the narrow path to our salvation, (Matthew 7:14), guided by the Light of Christ (2 Cor. 4:6), we make potential progress through good works, being obedient to the precepts of the Church, prayer, fasting and spiritual reading. Yet, progress is thwarted by unrepented sins.

Consider the movement of our two legs, as we progress forward in our walking and ambulation. One leg moves forward, planted in the direction we need to go, while the other leg pushes back on the ground we are leaving behind, propelling us forward. Clearly, we would make no progress with only one functioning leg. The leg that pushes backward represents the efforts we need to continually undertake to maintain a consciousness, an awareness, of our sins, and work to repentfully “push them away”, putting them behind us, as we move forward in our spiritual journey we call life.

Our Saviour compels all faithful to become Christ-emanating “lights” in a darkened world (Matthew 5:16). May we, through the intercessions of St. Photini, *continually* “shed the old man”, through maintaining vigilance against soul-destroying passions, and sloughing off our sins through the salvific action of repentance, clearing impediments and enlightening our souls, as we journey home... to God’s Kingdom!

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.