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A Year of the Lord Liturgical Bible Studies

Volume 4: Easter to Pentecost

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Chapter 5 Sunday of the Samaritan Woman

Prayer

Sing: *Christos Anesti* (Christ is Risen)

Eternal Son and Word of God, spring of healings, You found the Samaritan woman by Jacob's well and asked her for water. What a wonder! He who is enthroned upon the Cherubim speaks with a sinful woman. He who has set the earth upon the waters asks for water. He who pours forth fountains of waters asks her who was caught in the snares of the adversary for water that He may draw her to Him. He who is merciful seeks to give living water to her who is burning with sins. Therefore let us praise Him. Loving Lord, glory to You!

– Adapted Vesper Hymn, Sunday of the Samaritan Woman

Sing: *Christos Anesti* (Christ is Risen)

What God Gives

“If you only knew what God gives” (John 4:10). Life is filled with gifts. Every person is a gift. A family is a gift. A child is a gift. A friend is a gift. The sun is a gift. The sea, a tree, a flower.

Health, love, laughter. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the earth upon which we walk. Talking with a neighbor. Reading a book. Looking at the stars.

All gifts! In the Liturgy the congregation offers bread and wine to God. When the priest, representing the congregation, lifts up the gifts in a gesture of giving, he cries out to God, “We offer to You these gifts from Your own gifts in all and for all!”

Everything is a gift! But do you *know* what God gives?

For God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son. (John 3:16)

He gave us His Son – will He not also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32)

It is by God’s grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God’s gift. (Ephesians 2:8–9)

In His dialogue with the Samaritan woman, Christ began with the gift of water to lead her and the other Samaritans to a higher gift – “life-giving water” or “living water” (John 4:10). In Greek the phrase *hydor zon* means literally “running water.” Jesus used the image to convey the higher meaning of new life through the gift of the Holy Spirit. The living water is Christ Himself in His person, His teaching, and His saving work. The living water is the Holy Spirit, the fountain from which flows streams of blessings. The living water is also the gift of Grace in a Christian’s heart, which becomes a spring of holiness, goodness, and love, welling up to eternal life. “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water’” (John 7:37–38, RSV).

Do you know the gift of God? A story is told about a jewel and a jewel box: A king once gave a precious jewel to someone. To safeguard the jewel, its new owner and his family decided to put it in a beautiful jewel box crafted just for the valuable jewel. The next generation highly valued the jewel box as well as the jewel, so they made another box and placed the original jewel box and jewel inside. As the generations passed, the outer boxes became larger and larger, wonders in themselves, decorated with delicate carvings, figures, and precious stones, and admired greatly for their beauty and value. Then one day someone asked, “By the way, what is inside this magnificent jewel box?” And nobody knew. The precious jewel had been forgotten.

Read John 4:5–15, which is the first part of the Gospel reading for the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman.

Why did Jesus stop by Jacob’s well (verse 6)?

Why did the Samaritan woman at first refuse to give Jesus a drink (verse 9)

What did Jesus say to her (verse 10)? _____

How did Jesus describe the life-giving water (verse 14)? "Whoever drinks from it _____

Not fully understanding, what did the woman eagerly answer (verse 15)?

1. What does it mean to give and receive gifts? Does everyone like to receive gifts?

2. How would you apply these thoughts about gifts from question 1 to God's gifts and your relationship with Christ?

Breaking Barriers

The sun was hot at noon. Tired from the long journey, Jesus sat by the well to rest. When He asked for a cup of water, He knew what the response would be: “You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan.” (John 4:9). The hostility between Jews and Samaritans was proverbial. Later, when the disciples arrived, they too were perplexed by what they saw Jesus doing. Although they did not dare question Him about it, “they were greatly surprised to find him talking with a woman” (John 4:27).

Jesus broke down barriers between people and sexes. He talked to women as freely as he did to men, and He offered to all the gift of living water. Baptized into Christ, we are all one in Him (see Galatians 3:27–28). Jesus’s attitude toward the Samaritans was shocking to pious Jews. A pious Jew traveling from Judea to Galilee would take the long way around the district of Samaria rather than the short way through it. But Jesus saw love and goodness in Samaritans. Remember the Jew who was robbed and beaten by bandits, who was ignored by passing Jews but helped by a Samaritan man at great risk and expense (Luke 10:33–35)? Of the ten lepers who were healed by Jesus, of whom only one returned to give thanks (Luke 17:16)? Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman and welcomed the hospitality of her fellow villagers. Although a Jew, He won their hearts through His love, and he won their souls for the kingdom.

One of the most interesting things about Jesus was what H.H. Horne has called His “social freedom.” By virtue of His spiritual depth and inner authority, He was able to break through religious bias and racial prejudice, and He helped others to do the same. He was equally comfortable with the fishermen disciples and with the scholar Nicodemus. He ate with Simon the Pharisee as well as with Zacchaeus the tax collector. He spoke with the pure Nathaniel as well as with the adulterous Samaritan woman. Jesus was a good mixer, open to all, young and old, rich and poor, healthy and sick, sinner and righteous, because He lived “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24, RSV). Without compromising His principles or lowering His spiritual standards, Jesus was interested in all people, paid attention to them, listened to them, fulfilled their needs, and changed their lives!

Read John 4:16–17, the second part of the Gospel reading for the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman.

Why did the Samaritan woman think that Jesus was a prophet (verses 17–19)?

The Samaritan woman wondered where God should be worshipped – on the mountain or at Jerusalem? How did Jesus answer (verse 20)? “The time will come when _____

“The time is coming and is already here, when (verse 23) _____

“God is Spirit, and (verse 24) _____

What did Jesus say when the Samaritan woman mentioned the coming Messiah (verse 26)?

1. List some other examples of “breaking barriers” from the ministry of Christ. What can we learn from them?

2. What are some of the prejudices and biases dividing people today?

3. How can we as Christians live “in spirit and truth” reflecting Christ’s social freedom, and helping people relate to each other as brothers and sisters rather than as rivals?

Looking unto Jesus

“Give me that water! Then I will never be thirsty again,” the Samaritan woman exclaimed to Jesus (John 4:15). She did not quite know what she was saying, but she was turning to Christ with the questions and needs she had. The eyes of her heart were looking to Jesus. Her own gradual insight into the living water of Christ transformed her from an adulteress to a Christian missionary. According to tradition the Samaritan woman received the name Photine, which means “the enlightened one,” and she died a Christian martyr. Her spontaneous and joyous reaction to Christ brought her own townspeople to Him. Many Samaritans both welcomed and believed in Him when they heard His message. The eyes of their hearts, too, looked to Jesus.

Have you learned to look to Jesus with your questions and needs? More than a century ago, an inspiring essay was written by Theodore Monod entitled “Looking unto Jesus.” Born in 1836, the author was a French clergyman who worked extensively in France and the United States during the late nineteenth century. The purpose of the essay was to join out the significance of keeping our eyes fastened upon Christ. The following are a few excerpts from Monod’s essay:

Only three words, but these three words contain the whole secret of life. “Looking unto Jesus” – in the Scripture, to learn who He is, what He has done, what He gives, what He requires, to find in His character our pattern, in His teachings our instructions, in His precepts our law, in His promised our hope, in His person and His work a full satisfactions offered to every want of our souls.

Looking unto Jesus – that we may receive from Him the work and the cross of each day, with grace which is sufficient to bear the cross and do the work; patient through His patience; active by His activity; loving with His love; asking not “What can I do?” but “What can He not do?” relying upon His strength, which is made perfect in weakness.

Looking unto Jesus – and not to ourselves, our thoughts, our wishes, our plans; unto Jesus, and not unto the world, its allurements, its examples, its maxims, its opinions; unto Jesus, and not unto Satan, whether he tries to affright us with his rage or to seduce us with his flatteries.

Looking unto Jesus – and not to our strength; ...unto Jesus, and not to our weakness; ...unto Jesus, and not to our sins; ...unto Jesus, and not to the law; ...unto Jesus, and not to the law; ...unto Jesus, and not to the gifts we have received from Him; ...unto Jesus, and not to our faith; ...unto Jesus always, with a more fixed and steadfast gaze, ‘changed into the same image from glory to glory’ and thus waiting for the hour when He shall call us to pass from earth to heaven, and from time to eternity, the promised the blessed hour, when at least we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Read John 7:4:28–41, the third part of this Sunday’s Gospel reading.

What did the Samaritan woman say to her townspeople (verse 29)?

“ _____
_____.”

What was the food Jesus spoke of in verse 34? To obey _____
and to finish _____

What was the testimony of the Samaritans (verse 42)? “We _____
not because of what you said, but because _____
_____.”

Read Acts 11:19–30, which is the Epistle reading for the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman.

To whom was the Good News preached in Antioch for the first time (verse 20)?

What were the results of this preaching (verse 20)?

What did Barnabas urge the Christians at Antioch to do (verse 23)?

Who else taught at Antioch for a whole year (verses 22–26)? _____

By what name did the believers in Antioch become known (verse 26)? _____

1. What are the similarities between the conversations of the Samaritans and the conversations of the Gentiles in Antioch?

2. What are the differences?

3. What does “looking unto Jesus” mean to you in your own personal circumstances?

2. How can “looking unto Jesus” help our Christian mission in our families, in our parishes, in society, so that we may have a rich harvest?

Prayer

Sing: *Christos Anesti* (Christ Is Risen)

Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad! Christ has been revealed, taking flesh as man, that He may deliver Adam and all his generation from the curse of sin. Behold the wonder! He

comes to Samaria to talk with a woman. He who covers Himself with clouds seeks a drink. Of His own compassionate will He became poor for us. Therefore let us worship him in faith. Lord, glory to You?

– Hymn of Praises, Sunday of the Samaritan Woman

Sing: Christ Is Risen (*Christos Anesti*)