



The Sunday of the Samaritan Woman, May 13, 2012

John 4:5-42

In the Kontakion hymn for this Sunday we sing the following:

*The Samaritan Woman, having come to the well in faith, beheld You, the Water of Wisdom from which she drank plentifully and inherited the Heavenly Kingdom as one who is blessed forever.*

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Christ is risen!

In the patristic reading or synaxarion appointed for this Sunday, the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman, we find the following:

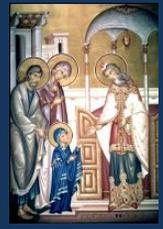
*"One of the most ancient cities of the Promised Land was Shechem...located at the foot of Mount Gerazim. There the Israelites had heard the blessings in the days of Moses... Near to this town, Jacob, who had come from Mesopotamia in the nineteenth century before Christ, bought a piece of land where there was a well. This well, preserved even until the time of Christ, was known as Jacob's Well. Later, before he died in Egypt, he left that piece of land as a special inheritance to his son Joseph (Gen. 49:22). This town, before it was taken into possession by Samaria, was also the leading city of the kingdom of the ten tribes. At present it is known as Nablus. It was the first city in Canaan visited by the Patriarch Abraham. Here also Joshua addressed the tribes of Israel for the last time. Almost three hundred years later, all Israel assembled there to make Rehoboam king."*

This commentary by the Holy Fathers continues:

*"When our Lord Jesus Christ, then, came at midday to this city...He was wearied from the journey and the heat, and He sat down at this well. After a little while the Samaritan woman mentioned in today's Gospel passage came to draw water. As she conversed at some length with the Lord and heard from Him secret things concerning herself, she believed in Him; and through her many other Samaritans also believed.*

# Sunday Sermon

Fr Ambrose Young  
Entrance of the Theotokos Skete



*"Concerning the Samaritans we know the following: In the year 721 before Christ, Salmanasar King of the Assyrians, took the ten tribes of the kingdom of Israel into captivity, and relocated all these people to Babylon and the land of the Medes. From there he gathered various nations and sent them to Samaria. These nations had been idolaters from before. Although they were later instructed in the Jewish faith and believed in the one God, they worshipped the idols also. Furthermore...they thought themselves to be descendants of Abraham and Jacob. Therefore, the pious Jews named these idolatrous peoples Samaritans, since they lived in Samaria... The Jews rejected them as heathen and foreigners, and had no communion with them at all, as the Samaritan woman observed, 'The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans' (John 4:9). Therefore, the name Samaritan is used derisively many times in the Gospel narrations. After the Ascension of the Lord, and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the woman of Samaria was baptized by the holy Apostles and became a great preacher and Martyr of Christ; she was called Photina, and her feast is kept on February 26."*

As is always the case, there is a spiritual application for this Gospel event, and this application is contained in the following verses of this Gospel, when the Savior says: *"The hour is coming, 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."*

What does this mean?

St. John Chrysostom explains that the Lord is here saying that, now that He has come into the world and is fulfilling all things, it is no longer necessary for the Jews—or anyone else, for that matter—to worship God only in the Temple of Jerusalem. That time, that era of worship, has now come to an end, and God can be worshipped anywhere and everywhere, and not just in one place. This is because God is a Spirit, and therefore not limited to or contained in one building, as the Jews had heretofore believed.

Therefore, St. John says, God now "accepts Christians more than Jews" because they understand this teaching of Christ. *"True worshippers He calls those who believe in Him; clearly this refers to*

# Sunday Sermon

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us who are of the Church, since we truly honor God, and do not merely worship shadows, as do the Jews and Samaritans. All the sacrifices of the Jews were but a shadow and a prefiguration of the truth.” (Brothers and sisters, we must remember this when we read about how the Jews want to rebuilt the Temple of Jerusalem and reinstitute animal sacrifice there once again—something which is ardently [and, I might add, financially] supported, by the way, by many fundamentalist Protestants.)

One might say that since Christ-God took on human flesh and a human nature and became man, therefore it’s not exactly accurate to say that God is a “Spirit”. But St. John Chrysostom addresses this, too. He explains that-

*“In calling (God) a spirit the Lord was referring to His Father, Who is fleshless. He then added, They that worship Him must worship him in spirit and in truth, clearly referring to Himself as the truth. Just as we speak of worship in the Son, as being in the image of God the Father, so also worship is in the Spirit, for in Himself He shows forth the Lord’s divinity. Thus, the Holy Spirit is inseparable from the Father and the Son in worship also. And in worshipping it is not right to worship a creature; He Who is worshipped must be worshipped as the Lord of creation. Christ is not divided; He Who spoke to the (Samaritan) woman was the one Lord Jesus Christ...worshipped as God not only on earth, but also in heaven.”*

St. John was particularly struck by Christ’s repeated emphasis on the truth in this Gospel narrative and the strong, indeed overriding sense that truth is the underpinning of all that the Lord is saying, and should be the entire foundation of our own lives as well. Thus, St. John concludes—and this is the final spiritual application or interpretation of this Gospel:

*“Let us, then, brethren, be true and spiritual in all things....Let every man speak the truth to his neighbor; let us not dissemble before god and men, saying one thing while having another in our hearts; we risk perdition. The Lord causes all who speak falsehood to perish, because lying is of the evil one. The lips of a truthful man are hallowed by the Truth, Which is Christ our God, but liars are defiled by their father, the devil. He who loves truth loves God; he who rejoices at a lie loves the will of the devil... The lies of men are wicked and filthy...Let us, therefore, approach God*

May 13, 2012

# Sunday Sermon

Fr Ambrose Young  
Entrance of the Theotokos Skete



*in truth and purity, for He is Truth and Life, that we also may live, and may be filled with the true living water, and may slake our burning thirst, and may be liberated from the evil things of this world. And may be vouchsafed eternal good things, by the grace of the truth God and Savior, Christ, to Whom belongeth glory unto the ages of ages. Amen.*

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Christ is risen!