

The Confessor's Tongue for May 22, A. D. 2011

Fifth Sunday of Pascha: Samaritan Woman; Martyr Basiliscus

In honor of St. Maximus the Confessor, whose tongue and right hand were cut off in an attempt by compromising authorities to silence his uncompromising confession of Christ's full humanity & divinity.

Fifth Sunday of Pascha: Samaritan Woman

On the fifth Sunday we commemorate the conversation of Jesus Christ with the Samaritan Woman (see March 26 for more about her). This event, occurring during Jewish Pentecost, commemorates the revelation of an obvious witness of the Divine glory of the resurrected Savior on the present Sunday, for after the conversation with the Lord the Samaritan woman and her community of Samaritans were convinced that the one who converses is truly the Savior of the world, the Messiah (John 4: 41-42). Parts of the specified conversation, serving as the subject of the Gospel reading, are commemorated in the troparia of the Canon and the stichera of Matins of the present Sunday. That is why this Sunday is also called the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman.

The Holy Church presents the Samaritan woman as an example of the raising up of sinful sinners from the depths, those who are looking for salvation and are ready to respond to the voice of God, who everywhere unceasingly calls out to them about raising up spiritually. The Samaritan woman, despite "burning with the heat of many passions", did not extinguish the feeling of goodness in her heart, the susceptibility to truth and the desire to please God, and for this she was made worthy to find the Savior, "sitting on the well". "Although He truly desires to free the woman from the snares of the enemy and for her to drink living water", the Savior made the Samaritan woman worthy of a conversation with Him. And during this conversation He, having stirred up sincere repentance of sins in her, reminded this woman about her sinful life. He caused her to understand by herself His elevated teaching about the "water of salvation" and caused a flaming desire in her heart "to accept the living water pouring out from Him". "Having drank it", the Samaritan woman "preached to all" about Christ, "who came in the flesh, to save mankind".

With all of this we also are inspired that Lord Himself always goes out to meet those searching for divine truth and grace and are capable of repentance, and mercifully grants them gifts even to establish their salvation, and through them the salvation of others also. Besides this, announcing to us in the Sunday Gospel reading which posited the Savior's teaching about the worship of God in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24) in His conversation with the Samaritan woman, the Holy Church teaches that we should pray to God in order that our prayer will be pleasing to Him and will be redemptive for us. *S. V. Bulgakov, Manual for Church Servers, Translation: Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris © January 7, 2004. All rights reserved.*

Worship "In Spirit and In Truth"

In the words: "the hour is coming, and now is, when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth", the Lord Jesus Christ points out the distinctive character and features of Christian Divine Services in comparison with Old Testament worship: Christian worship is the highest and fullest worship or service to God, a spiritual and true service in relation to the physical and typological Old Testament service.

The Old Testament worship was only the sign of God's covenant with the chosen people and the omen of salvation for all of the human race, which was fulfilled with the advent of Christ. This was, so to say, a will written on parchment, which, as a simple parchment, has no value, but which is precious for the one holding it, because it gives to him the right to receive the valid inheritance in due time. Whoever fulfilled the Old Testament rites with living faith in the coming of a future Redeemer, even though he did not receive the grace of redemption and salvation, but had a faithful pledge of this salvation also might die in the good hope of being a participant in the kingdom of Christ. These are not Christian mysteries: whoever receives them [Christian mysteries] with living faith in the Son of God who came and suffered for us, by that same action also truly receives the grace of deliverance, sanctification and salvation. The divine grace of the All Holy Spirit of God and the all-perfect blessing of the heavenly Father are also bestowed on us in all the sacred deeds of Christians.

Therefore both the performing and the participating in the sacred deeds by Christians perform a spiritual service to God and worship the Father in spirit and truth. Together with these words of the Lord about the worship of God in spirit and in truth means that when praying to God, we should pray with all our being, in both body and spirit; that the words and actions of our prayer be the expression of the valid feelings of our heart, and not the prayer of a solitary individual.

The one who prays to God in spirit is the one who, saying the words of a prayer, says them not only with the lips, but with all one's soul and heart; who, protecting himself with the sign of the cross of Christ, looks in spirit at the Lord Himself crucified on the cross; who, bending his neck, bows before God with both his heart and soul; who, prostrating himself to the ground, subjects all of himself into the hand of God in deepest humility and submission of heart, in full devotion to the will of God; who, standing in the flesh before the image of the Lord or His Most Pure Mother, in spirit stands before Him Himself, sitting on the throne of glory, and with His Most Pure Mother standing on His right hand; who,

kisses with his lips a holy icon of the Lord, kisses in his heart His most pure hands and feet.

The one who prays to God in truth is the one whose soul and heart is enlivened with that same faith and love, with those ideas and feelings, with those hopes and desires, with which the prayers of those men who composed the saints and spirit-bearers; who, worshipping God in the temple, does not bow to the idols of passions outside the temple; who, serving God by participation in the Divine Services in the church, serves Him also by his very life and deeds; who, calling God his Father, really loves Him, fears Him, obeys Him and fulfills His holy will as His true son.

"In prayer", as St. Tikhon of Zadonsk teaches, "we receive every good and consequently our enemy knowing this great benefit of prayer interferes with us, by presenting every image to us: like presenting thoughts of secular things, annoying evil thoughts, putting us into depression. Therefore even God-fearing people should be cautious in prayer to oppose the enemy by not letting him raise these thoughts in them, and to heed God alone, so that in both body and spirit we stand before God; and as we fall before Him in the flesh, so also we fall in spirit; that our tongue speaks about that which our mind and heart would not be silent; in a word, that the interior prayer agrees with the exterior".

Together with this, commanding us to worship God not only in spirit alone, but also in truth, the Lord orders us to pray not how we would think to do it, but how He Himself taught us by example and positive assertions and commandments (see Luke 6:12, Mt. 14:23; John 17:1; Luke 22:42-45; Mt. 26:39; Mt. 7:7, 21:22, Luke 22:40, John 14:13, 15:7; Mt. 18:19-20, 6:6; Mt. 4:9-13; Mt. 19:13-15, Luke 24:50, Mk. 8:7; Mt. 10:12, Luke 10:5-6; Mt. 21:13, Mk. 11:15, Luke 19:16; Mt. 26:26-29, Mk 14: 22, Luke 22:19, 1 Cor. 11:24; Mk. 16:15-16, John 22:21-24), as the apostles of Christ and the holy fathers have established, and as the holy Church of Christ urges us to serve God. Whoever teaches to serve the Lord God not as our Holy Church urges us is the adversary of the Church of Christ and is a false teacher. The Dukhobors, the Molokans, the Stundists and many other heretics, for example are those who teach contrary to the direct teaching of the Word of God: "so glorify God in your body and in your souls" (1 Cor. 6:20), means that they teach to worship God only in spirit; they reject the ceremonies of the Church, its communal Worship, and through it they even lose the redemptive grace of the sacraments, losing also whoever listens to their teachings. They worship God not in spirit and truth and they ignobly or carelessly stand in prayer, especially when present at the Divine Services in the temple of God; they do not want to sign themselves with the cross or to bow their heads, as indicated in the church commandment to sign oneself with the cross of Christ correctly and with piety. The sincere true prayer must even be expressed in those various

visible, awesome external actions, which are established by the Holy Church. S. V. Bulgakov, *Manual for Church Servers*, Translation: Archbishop Eugene D. Tarris © January 7, 2004. All rights reserved.

The Value of the Jesus Prayer

The prayer "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me the sinner", consists of two basic points: the dogmatic one— acknowledgement of the Divinity of Christ—and the suppliant one— supplication for our salvation. That is, the confession of faith in Christ is connected with the confession of our inability to be saved of our own accord. This says everything, and the whole struggle of the Christian is based on these two points: faith in Christ and awareness of our sinfulness. The "Jesus Prayer", therefore, expresses all the effort of the faithful in a few words and summarizes all the dogmatic teaching of our Orthodox Church.

We acquire this double knowledge through the Jesus Prayer. St. Maximus points out that the passion of pride consists of *two ignorances*: the ignorance of the Divine power and the ignorance of human weakness. And this double ignorance creates a "confused mind". Proud, therefore, is the man of ignorance, whereas, on the contrary, humble is the man of *double knowledge*. The latter knows his own weakness and the power of Christ. So, we acknowledge and confess the power of Christ (Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God) as well as our own weakness (have mercy on me the sinner) through the Jesus Prayer. We acquire in this way the blessed state of humility. Where there is humility, there also is the grace of Christ, and this grace is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Can you see, then, the worth of the Jesus Prayer? Can you see that we can obtain the Kingdom of God by its power?

Prayer & Idle Talk

It is necessary to preserve the fruit of prayer. It is spoiled and lost very often due to idle talking right after prayer and from [day] dreaming, which is also idle talking, only with yourself. Silence after prayer is very beneficial: it keeps the prayer in the mind, heart, and even in the mouth, audible to you. *St. Nikon of Optina*

Upcoming Events 2011

28 May: Saturday, 11:00 a.m. Birthisel Baptism
30 May: Memorial Day Picnic
28-31 July: Ten-Year Anniversary Celebration

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!