

In the Gospel reading for Sunday, we have the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. For me, there is something profound in the woman's response to Jesus that tells us a lot about living a Christian life.

The encounter begins with Jesus alone at the well. The apostles have left Him to get something to eat. While Jesus is resting at the well, a Samaritan woman comes to draw water. Then Jesus asks her to give Him a drink. She is amazed. No self-respecting Jew would do such a thing as to ask a Samaritan woman for a drink. Then their conversation ensues, with Jesus speaking to her about "living water," and her request that she get this water so that she no longer has to go to the well. Jesus then says, "Go call your husband and come back." She responds, "I do not have a husband." And then Jesus tells her that she is correct, because the man she is with is not her husband.

The woman's response would have no place on reality TV. She does not get angry. She does not take offense. She does not retaliate. She does not storm away. Nor does she deny what Jesus says. She recognizes that there is something about Jesus: "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet." And as she and Jesus speak about the differences in beliefs between the Samaritans and the Jews, Jesus reveals to her that He is the Messiah. And she goes to the town and tells the others that she has possibly met the Messiah, because He told her everything that she had done.

The woman's acceptance of the truth about herself led her to have faith in Jesus. It led her to have hope that He was the long-awaited Messiah. We find this connection between truth and hope in our second reading from Romans. St. Paul writes, "...hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us. For Christ, while we were still helpless, yet died at the appointed time for the ungodly. Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us."

Our hope does not lie in believing that we can stop ourselves from sinning. Our hope comes from the fact that even though we *are* sinners, God loves us so much that the Son of God died for our sins, and rose from the dead for our salvation! The time when we accept our need for God's mercy, grace, and love, is the time when we open ourselves to Jesus. If we are in denial about our sin, it is difficult to see how we let Jesus' love into our lives. Perhaps that was the problem for many of the Pharisees. They could not acknowledge their sin, and so they could not see Jesus for who He was.

If we believe in what Jesus has done and continues to do for us, and we have hope in His love, then we are compelled to share this Good News with others. The Samaritan woman is willing to tell the other townspeople about Jesus. I wonder what sort of a risk that was for her to take. Chances are that many of the people had a negative opinion about how she was living her life, and yet that did not stop her from testifying about Jesus. As He did with the Samaritan woman, Jesus can use us. Like Jesus, our food is to do the will of the Father. And as Jesus told the apostles, there are "fields ripe for the harvest." There are people looking for a reason to hope. There are people yearning to know that they are loved as they are, and willing to become better.

Acknowledging our sin need not lead us to despair! Instead it can lead us to Jesus and to hope and to proclamation of the Good News!

May God continue to bless us all, and may we find hope in His love.

In Christ,

Fr. Phil, CP