



June 24, 2020: Thoughts on the Bible text

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“Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans” (John 4: 9). The gospel of John describes a long conversation between Jesus and a Samaritan woman at a well. At that time, devout Jews did not want to have anything to do with the Samaritans, whom they viewed as heathens. Such an encounter would probably have caused them offence. The Jews held on to their view of the Samaritans even though they both had the same belief in the one God and lived their lives according to the Torah, which is the five books of Moses. Both groups were also descendants of the sons of Jacob (John 4: 12).

In addition to the above, it was not permissible in biblical times for a believing Jew to speak to a woman in public and especially not to a woman who, in the eyes of some of those around her, had an unusual and questionable lifestyle.

Jesus and the Samaritan woman

Our Bible text shows that Jesus had no prejudice against Samaritans, and no reservations in talking to women. All the gospels testify that Jesus approached both men and women equally and made them His disciples. During the conversation she had with Him, the Samaritan woman realised that it was the promised Messiah who was speaking to her. This realisation had an immediate effect. She left her water pot and went back to the city, where she spoke of her encounter with Jesus, whom she had recognised as the Messiah. Many of those whom she spoke to converted and wanted to hear themselves what Jesus had to say. They were so impressed by His word that they asked Him to stay in the city for two days. Many believed in His word

and could confess: "We know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (John 4: 42).

The activity of Jesus Christ

Jesus attracted people to the gospel because He also addressed those who were considered unworthy and were normally ignored. It is clear from the gospel that the disciples shared the prejudices of the devout Jews and were therefore amazed and perhaps even irritated by Jesus' unconventional behaviour (verse 27). It is precisely this behaviour, however, that made an impact on the woman, who asked Him: "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" Jesus' openness showed His love for humankind and His words demonstrated His authority. It was this which caused the Samaritans to have faith in Him. The woman He met and who recognised Him as the Messiah took the first step by testifying to others who then accepted her testimony and could then also have fellowship with Jesus (verses 40 -41).

Overcome prejudices

People can have prejudices and reservations because of their upbringing, the influences of others, or perhaps because of unpleasant experiences they have had. The prevailing mood or opinions can also have a negative impact on how we see and perceive people. Christians should counter inhumane attitudes with the unconditional love of Christ. Only in this way can the gospel be proclaimed to all nations and cultures.

An attitude of love, which is filled with the thought that our neighbour should share in all that which is good and uplifting, creates an atmosphere of peace and of trust. In this way people can be inspired to long for the love of Christ and have communion with Him. The followers of Jesus have the task of being witnesses of the love of Christ to all people through word and deed. Even in our current situation, in which we have to be very careful in our social interactions and in maintaining distance, we want to live according to the example of Jesus and not lose sight of the wellbeing of our neighbour.

Let us be creative and consider how, in these special circumstances, we can bear witness to the love and openness of Christ to others, both far and near.

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