

Reflecting with Jeanne Chézard de Matel: Third Sunday of Lent A

Journal 2, [391-392]

Text selection: Sister Mildred Truchard IWBS

English translation and commentary: Sister M. Clare Underbrink IWBS

The passage about the Samaritan woman is part of a longer journal entry in which Jeanne tells of how God caressed her, revealed to her secrets of his eternal love, and called her to announce his Gospel of Love. Throughout the entry she evokes several biblical characters to describe God's abundant love which is freely given and freely received.

Jeanne refers to the Samaritan woman at least thirty times in her writings. In these descriptions, the woman encounters Jesus, is taught by him, adores him, (sometimes falls in love with him). He converts her. She then leaves her water jar behind and goes out to bring her companions to him so that they, too, can adore him. Jeanne connects the Samaritan woman with the beloved in the Song of Songs. The reason the events take place at noon (cf. Sg 1:7 and Jn 4:6) is because the sun is the strongest at that time. It is the noon of pure love. Here, Jeanne describes the encounter of today's gospel:

The Gospel was read about the Samaritan woman who asked the divine Savior for living water. Although she knew neither the gift of God nor the One who was speaking to her and asking her for a drink, in his goodness, he said to her: If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, "Give me a drink," perhaps you would beg it from him, and he would give you living water (cf. Jn 4:10).

Jeanne quotes Jesus' words in Latin, and the word translated here as "beg" bears a nuance of "longing"; it is Jesus who, with his gift of living water, satisfies our deepest longings. Jeanne reads the account as a love story which parallels her own relationship with Jesus:

My divine Love told me that he would make me know and experience who it is who was speaking to me and how I possessed God's gift. This gift was the Word and the Holy Spirit. In having them, I also have the Father, since they are inseparable. [...]¹

Jeanne has grasped the significance of the whole message of John's gospel: Jesus reveals his true nature to each person who encounters him. The person (Nicodemus, the man born blind, the centurion, the Samaritan, the paralytic at the pool, etc.), is at first unaware of who Jesus is, then through a direct, personal encounter, is gradually opened to the truth: he is I AM, the Word become flesh, God's presence on earth. Just as Jesus reveals himself to the woman at the well, he reveals himself to

¹ The paragraph omitted here is a rather wordy reflection on the Trinity wherein Jeanne describes how God teaches her.

Jeanne, and to each of his disciples. The gift, Jeanne says, is God himself, Father, Son, and Spirit dwelling among us and in us. Jeanne continues:

This Divine Savior made me see how he freely pours out his waters on souls who receive them with loving trust and gratitude. He has the same generosity toward them. He does not force them, but leaves them free, as he did the Samaritan woman who could refuse or ask for this gift of God and this living water.

Jeanne emphasizes the fact that it is a love relationship that is fostered here. The love of God is freely given and freely received. Only the one who is open, trusting, and grateful truly receives the gift and thus recognizes Jesus as God's love incarnate. God pours out an overabundance of love. This is what we are all hungering and thirsting for, and all we have to do is receive it. Jeanne concludes:

“My inclination”, this Savior told me, “is greater than the needs of the soul. My love exceeds all measures to be able to give. It has no other limits but that of my goodness which is immense and which, of itself, is contagious. Of myself, I am good, and, in you, I am just.”

In Jeanne's writings, the word *inclination* most commonly refers to an affectionate love. Again, we are reading a love story. Jesus loves the woman; Jesus loves Jeanne - and any soul who is open to accept that love - with an extravagant, superfluous love.

The expression, “My love exceeds all measures to be able to give” is translated literally. A looser interpretation might be: “My love surpasses anything that would limit its power to give” or, “Nothing can limit my power to give”. The measure of God's love is the measure of God's bounty, God's goodness - it is without measure, so immense that we cannot even fathom it. That realization makes it contagious. One cannot receive this great a love without spreading it. God is so good that we cannot imagine it, and God chooses to dwell in us, giving us living water, making us just, allowing us to spread that goodness to everyone we encounter.