

**15TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
AUGUST 27/SEPTEMBER 9, 2007**

II CORINTHIANS 4: 6-15

ST. MATTHEW 22: 35-46

Fr. Dr. Photios+ (W)

Gospel....Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.

The Lawyer's Question

Lawyers today are not looked upon kindly by a lot of folks. Whether or not this view is justified is not for me (or us) to say. There are good and not so good people, so too with lawyers. Historically, they have not fared well in public esteem. Our lawyer in the Gospel exudes “the great and spiritually destructive evil of vainglory and comes to tempt the Lord “out of extreme envy”.¹ He asks the question “*Master, which is the great commandment in the Law?*” with a view toward tripping up Christ in His answer and perhaps getting Him to add to the first commandment in some way which would allow Him to be made out to be an innovator.²

Jesus Answers

Christ answers the query laden with envy with love:

He shows him that love is the first of all the commandments, and teaches that it behooves us not to love God partially, but to give ourselves entirely to God.³

Love Is The Foundation Of The Two Commandments

We must love God completely and our neighbour. These two commandments are united and contain all the others:

For he who loves his neighbour fulfills **all** the commandments, and he who fulfills all the commandments, **loves** God. So by means of each other these two commandments are welded together and united, containing within themselves all the other commandments (emphases supplied).⁴

The Lawyer Changes

Deeply affected by the Lord's words, the lawyer changed and believed and Christ said to him *Thou art not far from the kingdom of God* (St. Mark 12:34 and see the discussion in Bl. Theophylact's explanations of *St. Mark, 12: 28-34*):

Moreover, although the lawyer had come out of envy to tempt Christ, when he heard His words, he believed and received praise (from Christ), as Mark recounts: Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, Thou are not far from the kingdom of God.⁵

Christ Calls His Witness, David, To His Divinity

The Pharisees thought He was a mere man, so He brings forth David as His witness to His Divinity. He points out that David had called Him Lord "in spirit,":

He says, How then does David name Him Lord, and he does not simply name Him Lord, but 'in spirit', that is, as revealed to him by the grace of the Spirit? He does not say this to deny that He is the son of David, but to show that He is not a mere man, descended only from the Davidic seed.⁶

Christ demonstrates That He Is Lord From Prophecy:

Since they thought He was a mere man, He overturns their belief and by means of the prophecy of David (Ps. 109.1) teaches the truth, that He **is also the Lord, proclaiming his own divinity** (emphasis supplied).⁷

This apparently so stunned them that they were simply silent not venturing anything to say “They had received such a serious blow that they no longer dared to attempt the same things any more.”⁸

We can learn a variety of spiritual teachings from today’s Gospel. Among which would be to avoid envy and answer all persecution with love. See God in your neighbours. Remember that people can change as the envious lawyer did. Live according to the two great commandments which contain all the others. Believe completely in Christ. Believing in Him means fully accepting His Divinity. Do not read materials which question His Divinity. Know in your heart that He is our Saviour and then follow your heart along the righteous road to salvation manifesting your faith in the good works that flow therefrom.

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

¹ *The Gospel Commentary (Lessons Taken from the Holy Gospel and from Many of the Divine Writings of Our Father among the Saints, John Chrysostom)* (translated from the Slavonic into English by Hieromonk German Ciuba), Russian Orthodox Church of the Nativity of Christ (Old Rite), Erie, Pennsylvania, 2002, pp. 399-400.

² Blessed Theophylact, *Explanations of the Holy Gospel of St. Matthew, Vol. I*, (translated from the original Greek by Fr. Christopher Stade) Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, pp. 192-193.

³ *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, p. 400.

⁴ Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

⁵ *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, p. 401.

⁶ Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, p. 404.