

Saint_Thomas_on_the_Gospel_for_the_17th_Sunday_after_Pentecost.

But the Pharisees hearing that he had silenced the Sadducees, came together: And one of them, a doctor of the law, asking him, tempting him: Master, which is the greatest commandment in the law? Jesus said to him: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets. And the Pharisees being gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying: What think you of Christ? whose son is he? They say to him: David's. He saith to them: How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying: The Lord said to my Lord, Sit on my right hand, until I make thy 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.

JEROME. The Pharisees having been themselves already confuted (in the matter of the denarius), and now seeing their adversaries also overthrown, should have taken warning to attempt no further deceit against Him; but hate and jealousy are the parents of impudence.

ORIGEN; Jesus had put the Sadducees to silence, to show that the tongue of falsehood is silenced by the brightness of truth. For as it belongs to the righteous man to be silent when it is good to be silent, and to speak when it is good to speak, and not to hold his peace so it belongs to every teacher of a lie not indeed to be silent, but to be silent as far as any good purpose is concerned.

JEROME; The Pharisees and Sadducees, thus foes to one another, unite in one common purpose to tempt Jesus.

PSEUDO-CHRYS. Or the Pharisees meet together, that their numbers may silence Him whom their reasoning's could not confute; thus, while they array numbers against Him, showing that truth failed them; they said among themselves, Let one speak for all, and all speak, through one, so if He prevail, the victory may seem to belong to all; if He be overthrown, the defeat may rest with Him alone; so it follows, Then one of them, a teacher of the Law, asked him a question, tempting him.

ORIGEN; All who thus ask questions of any teacher to try him, and not to learn of him, we must regard as brethren of this Pharisee, according to what is said below, Inasmuch as you have done it to one of the least of mine, you have done it to me.

AUG. Let no one find a difficulty in this, that Matthew speaks of this man as putting his question to tempt the Lord, whereas Mark does not mention this, but concludes with what the Lord said to him upon his answering wisely, You are not far from the kingdom of God. For it is possible that, though he came to tempt, yet the Lord's answer may have wrought correction within him. Or, the tempting here meant need not be that of one designing to deceive an enemy, but rather the cautious approach of one making proof of a stranger. And that is not written in vain, Who believes lightly, he is of a vain heart.

ORIGEN; He said Master tempting Him, for none but a disciple would thus address Christ. Whoever then does not learn of the Word, nor yields himself wholly up to it, yet calls it Master, he is brother to this Pharisee thus tempting Christ. Perhaps while they read the Law before the Savior's coming, it was as a question among them which was the great

commandment in it; nor would the Pharisee have asked this, if it had not been long time inquired among themselves, but never found till Jesus came and declared it.

PSEUDO-CHRYS. He who now inquires for the greatest commandment had not observed the least. He only ought to seek for a higher righteousness who has fulfilled the lower.

JEROME; Or he inquires not for the sake of the commands, but which is the first and great commandment, that seeing all that God commands is great, he may have occasion to cavil whatever the answer be.

PSEUDO-CHRYS. But the Lord so answers him, as at once to lay bare the dissimulation of his inquiry, Jesus said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. You shall love, not 'fear,' for to love is more than to fear; to fear belongs to slaves, to love to sons; fear is in compulsion, love in freedom. Whoever serves God in fear escapes punishment, but has not the reward of righteousness because he did well unwillingly through fear. God does not desire to be served servilely by men as a master, but to be loved as a father, for that He has given the spirit of adoption to men.

But to love God with the whole heart, is to have the heart inclined to the love of no one thing more than of God. To love God again with the whole soul is to have the mind stayed upon the truth, and to be firm in the faith. For the love of the heart and the love of the soul are different. The first is in a sort carnal, that we should love God even with our flesh, which we cannot do unless we first depart from the love of the things of this world. The love of the heart is felt in the heart, but the love of the soul is not felt, but is perceived because it consists in a judgment of the soul. For he who believes that all good is in God, and that without Him is no good, he loves God with his whole soul. But to love God with the whole mind, is to have all the faculties open and unoccupied for Him. He only loves God with his whole mind, whose intellect ministers to God, whose wisdom is employed about God, whose thoughts travail in the things of God, and whose memory holds the things which are good.

AUG. Or otherwise; You are commanded to love God with all your heart, that your whole thoughts - with all your soul, that your whole life - with all your mind, that your whole understanding - may be given to Him from whom you have that you give. Thus He has left no part of our life which may justly be unfilled of Him, or give place to the desire after any other final good; but if aught else present itself for the soul's love, it should be absorbed into that channel in which the whole current of love runs. For man is then the most perfect when his whole life tends towards the life unchangeable, and clings to it with the whole purpose of his soul.

GLOSS. Or, with all your heart, understanding; with all your soul, i.e. your will; with all your mind, i.e. memory; so you shall think, will, remember nothing contrary to Him.

ORIGEN; Or otherwise; With all your heart, that is, in all recollection, act, thought; with all your soul, to be ready, that is, to lay it down for God's religion; with all your mind, bringing forth nothing but what is of God. And consider whether you cannot thus take the heart of the understanding, by which we contemplate things intellectual, and the mind of

that by which we utter thoughts, walking as it were with the mind through each expression, and uttering it. If the Lord had given no to the Pharisee who thus tempted Him, we should have judged that there was no commandment greater than the rest.

But when the Lord adds, This is the first and greatest commandment, we learn how we ought to think of the commandments, that there is a great one, and that there are less down to the least. And the Lord says not only that it is a great, but that it is the first commandment, not in order of Scripture, but in supremacy of value. They only take upon them the greatness and supremacy of this precept, who not only love the Lord their God, but add these three conditions.

Nor did He only teach the first and great commandment, but added that there was a second like to the first, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. But if Whoever loves iniquity has hated his own soul, it is manifest that he does not love his neighbor as himself, when he does not love himself.

AUG. It is clear that every man is to be regarded as a neighbor, because evil is to be done to no man. Further, if everyone to whom we are bound to show service of mercy, or who is bound to show it to us, be rightly called our neighbor, it is manifest that in this precept are comprehended the holy Angels who perform for us those services of which we may read in Scripture. Whence also our Lord Himself would be called our neighbor; for it was Himself whom He represents as the good Samaritan, who gave succor to the man who was left half-dead by the way.

ID. He that loves men ought to love them either because they are righteous, or that they may be righteous; and so also ought he to love himself either for that he is, or that he may be righteous. And thus without peril he may love his neighbor as himself.

ID. But if even yourself you ought not to love for your own sake, but because of Him in whom is the rightful end of your love, let not another man be displeased that you love even him for God's sake. Whoever then rightly loves his neighbor, ought to endeavor with him that he also with his whole heart love God.

PSEUDO-CHRYS. But who loves man is as who loves God; for man is God's image, wherein God is loved, as a King is honored in his statue. For this cause this commandment is said to be like the first.

HILARY; Or otherwise; That the second command is like the first signifies that the obligation and merit of both are alike; for no love of God without Christ, or of Christ without God, can profit to salvation.

It follows, On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

AUG. Hang, that is, refer thither as their end.

RABAN. For to these two commandments belongs the whole decalogue; the commandments of the first table to the love of God, those of the second to the love of our neighbor.

ORIGEN; Or, because he that has fulfilled the things that are written concerning the love of God and our neighbor, is worthy to receive from God the great reward, that he should be enabled to understand the Law and the Prophets.

AUG. Since there are two commandments, the love of God and the love of our neighbor, on which hang the Law and the Prophets, not without reason does Scripture put one for both; sometimes the love of God; as in that, We know that all things work together for good to them that love God; and sometimes the love of our neighbor; as in that, All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. And that because if a man love his neighbor, it follows therefrom that he loves God also; for it is the selfsame affection by which we love God, and by which we love our neighbor, save that we love God for Himself, but ourselves and our neighbor for God's sake.

ID. But since the Divine substance is more excellent and higher than our nature, the command to love God is distinct from that to love our neighbor. But if by yourself, you understand your whole self, that is both your soul and your body, and in like manner of your neighbor, there is no sort of things to be loved omitted in these commands. The love of God goes first, and the rule thereof is so set out to us as to make all other loves center in that, so that nothing seems said of loving yourself. But then follows, You shall love your neighbor as yourself, so that love of yourself is not omitted.

PSEUDO-CHRYS. The Jews tempted Christ, supposing Him to be mere man; had they believed Him to be the Son of God, they would not have tempted Him.

Christ therefore, willing to show that He knew the treachery of their hearts, and that He was God, yet would not declare this truth to them plainly, that they might not take occasion thence to charge Him with blasphemy, and yet would not totally conceal this truth; because to that end had He come that He should preach the truth; He therefore puts a question to them, such as should declare to them who He was; What think you of Christ? whose Son is He?

CHRYS. He first asked His disciples what others said of Christ, and then what they themselves said; but not so to these. For they would have said that He was a deceiver, and wicked. They thought that Christ was to be mere man, and therefore they say to Him, The Son of David. To reprove this, He brings forward the Prophet, witnessing His dominion, proper Sonship, and His joint honor with His Father.

JEROME; This passage is out of the 109th Psalm. Christ is therefore called David's Lord, not in respect of His descent from him, but in respect of His eternal generation from the Father, wherein He was before His fleshly Father. And he calls Him Lord, not by a mere chance, nor of his own thought, but by the Holy Spirit.

REMIG. That He says, Sit you on my right hand, is not to be taken as though God had a body, and either a right hand or a left hand; but to sit on the right hand of God is to abide in the honor and equality of the Father's majesty.

PSEUDO-CHRYS. I suppose that He formed this question, not, only against the Pharisees, but also against the heretics; for according to the flesh He was truly David's Son, but his Lord according to His Godhead.

CHRYS. But He rests not with this, but that they may fear, He adds, Till I make your enemies your footstool; that at least by terror He might gain them.

ORIGEN; For God puts Christ's enemies as a footstool beneath His feet, for their salvation as well as their destruction.

REMIG. But till is used for indefinite time, that the meaning be, Sit You for ever, and for ever hold your enemies beneath your feet.

GLOSS. That it is by the Father that the enemies are put under the Son, denotes not the Son's weakness, but the union of His nature with His Father. For the Son also puts under Him the Father's enemies, when He glorifies His name upon earth. He concludes from this authority, If David then call Him Lord, how is He his son?

JEROME; This question is still available for us against the Jews; for these who believe that Christ is yet to come, assert that He is a mere man, though a holy one, of the race of David. Let us then thus taught by the Lord ask them, If He be mere man, and only the Son of David, how does David call Him his Lord? To evade the truth of this question, the Jews invent many frivolous answers. They allege Abraham's steward, he whose son was Eliezer of Damascus, and say that this Psalm was composed in his person, when after the overthrow of the five kings, the Lord God said to his lord Abraham, Sit you on my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool. Let us ask how Abraham could say the things that follow, and compel them to tell us how Abraham was born before Lucifer, and how he was a Priest after the order of Melchisedech, for whom Melchisedech brought bread and wine, and of whom he received tithes of the spoil?

CHRYS. This conclusion He put to their questionings, as final, and sufficient to stop their mouth.

Henceforward accordingly they held their peace, not by their own good-will, but from not having anything to say.

ORIGEN; For had their question sprung of desire to know, He would never have proposed to them such things as should have deterred them from asking further.

RABAN. Hence we learn that the poison of jealousy maybe overcome, but can hardly of itself rest at peace.

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