

The Wednesday Word, May 20, 2015: A Good Question and a Great Answer

“And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, why do you call me good? None is good, save one, that is, God. You know the commandments, do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, all these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, yet you lack one thing: sell all that you have, and distribute unto the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. (Luke 18:18-23)

Let’s summarise this story. A wealthy ruler approached Christ, calling Him ‘Good Master’ asking what He could do to gain eternal life. That’s a good query!

Not all enquiries are as sensible as that one. We are all guilty of asking stupid questions from time to time. However, the man in our scripture passage asked a good question. It wasn’t a misspoken one. There was no lack of seeming sincerity in it. But Jesus, strange to say, immediately asked Him, in a very pointed manner, why he called Him good, being that there is but one alone who is good and that is God!

The opponents of the grand truth of the Deity of Christ seize on this passage and say; “These verses demonstrate clearly, that Jesus is not God. In fact,” they say, “Here, He actually denied that He was God in human flesh appearing.”

Wrong! Jesus denied nothing of the sort! He merely asked, why the man had called Him good for there was none good but God. What Jesus was saying was, “You don’t believe that I’m God so why are you calling me good?” This young man had made a confession of faith that he did not actually believe. He had addressed Jesus as God and had asked him a question about eternal life, a question which God alone was uniquely qualified to answer.

When Jesus asked the young ruler why he had called him good, He was speaking to the man’s conscience and probing, as it were, to get him to face his lack of sincerity. This gentleman had inadvertently confessed that Jesus was God. Jesus, as the master soul-winner, then challenged him as to what he really believed.

If he were to follow through on what Jesus was about to tell him to do, he really would need to have confidence that Christ was God. And what was he asked to do? He was told to sell all and distribute everything to the poor and come and follow Jesus. To do such a thing, this man would need to have a deep conviction that Jesus was indeed God.

Of course, this exposed the man as being covetous and not the Law keeper he had boasted of being. He was also looking for something to do to gain a place in Heaven. But that’s another story. In conclusion, here, we once more observe the radical nature of Christ’s teachings. A good man does not tell someone that they have to sell all and come follow him! It is entirely fitting and legitimate, however, for God to ask or even demand such a thing, but for a mere man, to ask such a thing would be evil. So again Jesus defies this silly nonsense of being classified as a good moral teacher, but not God!

And that's the Gospel Truth!