



My Beloved Ones,

In this Sunday's Gospel, we begin with what is possibly the perfect summing up of our path as Christians: *"At that time, a lawyer came up to Jesus and asked him a question, to test him. 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?' And he said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets'" (Matthew 22:35-40).*

The lawyer failed to trap Christ, and now Christ turned to the Pharisees who were watching to see how this dialogue would end. He knew that the Lawyer did not ask the question out of real belief, and so to the Pharisees, Jesus asked, *"What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, 'The son of David.' He said to them, 'How is it then that David, inspired by the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, till I put thy enemies under thy feet'? If David thus calls him Lord, how is he his son?' And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did any one dare to ask him any more questions" (Matthew 22:42-46).*

Truly, this passage is very rich, and it is possible that many readers also become silent when they read it. We can understand it, however, by looking at the source of Christ's quotation, the 110<sup>th</sup> Psalm. Now, in English, we do not have the different Hebrew words King David used for "Lord". In the original, the Psalm begins: *"The Lord [Yahweh, or God] said to my Lord [Adonai, or Master] ..."* Therefore, King David is showing us that God the Father is speaking to someone else, someone whom even the great King David calls *my [Master]*". Since King David uses the Psalm to prophesy the Messiah, Jesus shows, the Christ is not just the Son of David, but the Son of God.

If the Pharisees, who were responsible for upholding Mosaic Law, disliked Christ using the Books of Deuteronomy & Leviticus to simplify the Law into only 2, they were even more insulted when Christ used scripture to prove that He was both the long-awaited Messiah, and the incarnate Son of God. They did not dare to ask Him anything more, but in their silence, we know they do not feel joyful, but think evil thoughts of how to destroy Him. Looking forward to Great Lent, we will be set on the path which leads us to the end of Jesus's conflict with the authorities at Golgotha. However, we also know that through the Crucifixion, Christ is leading us all to the Resurrection. So let us not, like the Lawyer & the Pharisees, be blind in mind and heart. May we instead rejoice in the loving commandments our Lord gave to us, looking to the Son of God to support and uplift our best efforts as we try to show the kind of love we should: both to God's Orthodox Church, and to the whole world.

**+ALEXIOS**

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