

God is Good

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost) is Mark 10:17-22. This text is about the rich young man running up to Jesus asking what he must do to inherit eternal life.

The context suggests that the man was really looking to appear good in the sight of Jesus and justify himself with his own good deeds. He was very satisfied with his own path to eternal life.

Calling Jesus “good,” the man seems to be buttering Jesus up for what the man wants from Jesus. It might have been due to Jesus’ many miracles but it doesn’t really acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus redefines “good” putting the focus from the man’s works to who God is. Jesus was not denying his own goodness but was forcing the man to recognize that his only hope was in total reliance on God, who alone can give eternal life. He may also have been encouraging the young man to consider the full identity and nature of the One he was addressing.

Jesus gives him another opportunity to discover the inadequacies of his way of thinking concerning how a man could only be saved. Jesus suggests that the man look to the commandments as something to keep perfectly. This should have brought the man to see the errors of his way of thinking. But he just doesn’t get and once more justifies himself by claiming that he is keeping commands perfectly.

In spite of the young man's foolish answer, Jesus looked upon him earnestly, affectionately, he regarded him lovingly. He loved him, not only on account of his youth, his earnestness, and his evident sincerity, but because he wanted, if possible, to save his soul. He sought to strip away the man’s self-deception about having kept the Law.

The young man’s primary problem was his wealth (v. 22), and therefore Jesus’ prescription was to rid him of it. There is no indication that Jesus’ command to him was meant for all Christians. It applies only to those who have the same spiritual problem.

Whatever spiritual issues we may have from time to time, we can be fully assured that God is ready to help us with them. God is good at all times especially in difficult times. He always stands ready, with open arms, to strengthen our faith.

Prayer: Good Lord, thank you for knowing us better than we know ourselves and prescribing just the right solution to our spiritual missteps. Help us to be comforted by your everlasting and loving forgiveness.

Amen