

9. June 2023

An open heart

Mk 12:35-37

While teaching in the Temple, Jesus said, 'How can the scribes maintain that the Christ is the son of David? David himself, moved by the Holy Spirit, said: The Lord declared to my Lord, take your seat at my right hand till I have made your enemies your footstool. David himself calls him Lord; in what way then can he be his son?' And the great crowd listened to him with delight.

It was very difficult for the Lord to convince the scribes, even though He tried again and again with great patience. It was evident that He surpassed them in His knowledge of the Scriptures. So it is to be hoped that, at least with some of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus' words - credited by His works - finally fell on good ground, and bore fruit, even if it was later.

However, it is to be feared that - as the gospels testify - many of them had hardened their hearts and were no longer interested in discovering the truth through debate, but only in being right or, at worst, even in setting Jesus up. In the face of such an attitude, any debate on Holy Scripture is sterile, because fruitful dialogue requires an openness to the truth.

If we have an open heart, we will be able to accept the words of Jesus even if we cannot yet understand them. In this case, when we cannot yet consent with our understanding to what we hear, trust comes into play, which gives rise to inner openness. Then the words of the Lord fall on the "good soil" of an open heart and can begin to take shape within man. In this way, "not understanding" ceases to be an obstacle, since the heart is already welcoming the word of the Lord and allowing itself to be instructed by it. The understanding of the intellect could be added later.

An example of such a situation could be the words the Lord had spoken in the discourse on the bread of life: *"In all truth I tell you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."* (Jn 6:53). Certainly this was

beyond the disciples' capacity to understand, but their trust in the Master meant that they did not turn away from Him as did many others who had followed Him until then, because the latter considered His teaching too hard (Jn 6:60). Later, the Holy Spirit enlightened the disciples to understand these words of the Lord.

In the case of the scribes, the opposite was probably the case. Their closed hearts made them reject His word beforehand, so that it could not unfold its fruitfulness. It could not penetrate the heart, becoming an invitation to simply accept the logic contained in Jesus' words referring to the Scriptures. On the contrary, His words could even become a kind of threat to them.

On the other hand, the huge crowd that followed Jesus reacted differently: *"the great crowd listened to him with delight"*. They do not enter into competition with Him, nor do they seek to prove that He is teaching error or false doctrine. In this way, the word could spread in them and cause them to rejoice, because the Lord spoke with authority.

Every word that comes out of Jesus' mouth is destined not to return to Him empty, but to accomplish that for which it was spoken (Is 55:11).

An attitude of openness of heart could have led to a deeper reflection on the logic expressed by Jesus: if David calls the Messiah 'Lord', He cannot be His son. So who is the Messiah, where does He come from and where is He going?

Jesus wants to lead His listeners to recognise Him. Every person must learn that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Redeemer of mankind. First of all, His own people must recognise Him, and then all nations. For this purpose, the Lord then sends His Apostles as His witnesses (Mt 28:19-20), who remained faithful to Him and proclaimed the truth.

This mission which Jesus entrusted to the Church is not yet complete. Even today, thanks to the action of the Holy Spirit, people still have to recognise that Jesus is the Son of God. The Word of the Lord has been handed down and written down in letters. Whoever accepts this Word with an open heart will recognise its truthfulness and will be able to confess like Peter: *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (Mt 16:16).

If this happens, it was the Holy Spirit who opened his or her eyes and led the person to faith, for *"nobody is able to say, 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit"* (1 Cor 12:3). From then on, people can walk in the light of God and become witnesses of the Risen One, so that through them, too, others may receive the proclamation of salvation.