

First Baptist Church Smiths Falls

September 23, 2018

Scripture Readings: Matthew 21:23-32

23 ¶ Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you this authority?" 24 Jesus replied, "I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. 25 John's baptism-- where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from men?" They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?'" 26 But if we say, 'From men'-- we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet." 27 So they answered Jesus, "We don't know." Then he said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things. 28 ¶ "What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.' 29 "I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. 30 "Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go. 31 "Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered. Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. 32 For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.

Prayer of Illumination: Proverbs 30:5

"Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him."

Congregational Prayer: "Our Father" Our Father, Which Art In Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom Come. Thy Will Be Done, On Earth As It Is In Heaven. Give Us This Day, Our Daily Bread, And Forgive Us Our Trespases, As We Forgive Those Who

Trespass Against Us. And Lead Us Not Into Temptation, But Deliver Us From Evil. For Thine Is The Kingdom, The Power And The Glory. Forever And Ever. Amen

Message: "Do as I Preach, But Don't Watch ME"

- The Fork Joke (Lost on deserted island with cannibals).
- Jesus was the master of many things, including story telling. He too provided many stories which, like the fork joke, had an unexpected twist, such as today's. Let's talk about this parable, and talk about authentically living for Jesus, including doing what we say we shall do.

Part 1: The Parable: The Two Sons (Matthew 21:23-32).

- The scene is a farm house. Grapes growing in the family's vineyard was what they farmed. It takes many years, sometimes generations, to grow a good field of grapes. And the vineyard would be passed from father to son over many generations, building it up, and making it better, more productive. But as you know, all it takes is one generation to neglect and it all falls apart. You cannot have a vineyard without doing work. And so in Matthew 21, Jesus says that a father gives his sons some work to

do. All parents know that there are two reasons to give work to our children (1) it has to be done (2) it gives them something positive to do (including sometimes simply gets them out of one's hair). Work needs to be done and builds character.

- This parable is all about shame and dishonour. Think about this: why did those two sons have to be asked to go to work? Come on now, could they not see the work that needed to be done? Did they not know that there was work? Think about it.
- Do we (WE) not also see the work that needs to be done (us. You and I today?)? Do we not see the hurting and needy people around us, like the work the father saw, and is it not obvious that the work needs to be done? Why do we await an invitation? Why do we wait for God to give us an order that we clearly know we should be doing? Their first area of shame and dishonour came when the sons had to be asked to work when they knew better. Let's not be caught in that trap.
- But then they had another area of shame and dishonour: they both responded or acted inappropriately. Both of them. Look at their

response to their father: one is rude, the other lies.

- The first son makes it very clear that he will not do what he is asked - he says NO to his father. In the society of Jesus, to say no in this manner was to shame his father, his family and the entire community. To dishonour his father would be seen as questioning his father's position of authority.
- Now here is the good news of this parable: this son has a chance to think, and repents. He changes his course of action. He walks away from his sinfulness, and does the work. Jesus tells us in verse 31 that the tax collectors and other sinners are like this son. They too have heard God's command to love Him, follow Him and obey God, and initially reject it. They may need more time to think about it. They may need to see their own sinfulness and shame and dishonour. Praise the Lord that many do as this son, and they seek to do God's will for their life. And they, we perhaps, have repented from shame and dishonour and walked as we ought with God.
- The other son cheerfully told his father that he would do the job,

more than likely VERY loudly, "Father, I will gladly work for you!" But when the rubber meets the road, that son is all talk, and no action, and the second son is nowhere near the vineyard to obey and do the work of his father.

- Now, look at the audience of this parable (verse 23). Jesus is in the Temple Court, and is being questioned in a rude manner by those who are the religious leaders. Who are they really? They are those who have said yes to God with their words, but have not done what God has asked of them! He is telling the religious leaders a story about them. Look at verse 32: *"John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him."* They have heard, but not believed. They seem to have said yes, but have walked away from God. They are losing sight of God.
- I believe that many churches today are full of the second son - those who have appeared to say yes, but to do nothing. Those who know what God wants, but refuse to change. Those who have

heard the joyous good news of Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice to give us life, but are instead happy to keep the Church as a social gathering place, a service club, a place of religious practice, but without all that God stuff, a place without offense, or asking us to do anything we don't want to do. They are places of religious entertainment and showmanship. There are churches that operate without the truth of Jesus and His atoning gift of love and sacrifice, without asking everyone to change to walk in the light of Jesus.

- How many times in the history of the Christian Church are churches jammed packed with people, but they were mostly the second sons? For instance, in Brantford even until a few short years ago, the Mayor had to go to First Baptist Church. And workers had to go to the Church of the boss - or lose job. They were Yes sons. Could you be here because of you parents or spouse but you really are not here? Could you be here because you want to do some "God-time," some pew-sitting, something to look good? I'm here because I'm a yes person, but I'm really not going

to do what God asks of me, even though I know it, and I know it is true, and I know that following Him leads to life. Some have been in churches all their life without ever making the commitment and truly walking with God. Some have pretended to say yes for decades, but are still lost in their own rebellion and sinfulness.

Some have gone on to big positions in churches without ever truly serving God. Is this you?

- This parable makes it clear that the second son type, those who say yes without meaning it, risk missing the kingdom of God.

Abundant life under the Lordship of Jesus, and eternal life forever with Christ will pass right by those who do not sincerely say yes to Jesus, and live it.

- Good intentions may be deadly - the plans of those who are insincere are just that - insincere - those who preach one thing, but do not act on it had better be careful, Jesus says in this parable, as you may miss the kingdom of God all together.

Part 2: Authentic Faith

- What is this parable telling us, and what should we learn?

- First truth: No son did right. Each son missed the mark. Romans 3:23 New International Version (NIV) says: “... *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...*” All have sinned. One of the realities of life is that we are all sinners. In talking to others about Jesus, and in talking to those who evangelize regularly, this one point is a real stumbling block for some people - “I am not a sinner.” “How dare you say such a thing about me.” “I live well. I am living a caring life and I give to others. I don’t get involved with drugs nor steal. I’m a good person. I’m good enough.” Good enough won’t get you anywhere. Living in a way that seems to be right won’t save your soul. Tough question: how do you define good? Too many things in life seem to be good and right now, today, but in the end they are not. (Eggs). What is good for me may not be good for everyone. So what is good? What truly is good? If you think that being “Good” will save you, think again. Look at this story closely. No son did what was right.

- Second truth: One son finished well. Think about this. One missed the mark, but one ended well by being obedient. I once heard that

one of the secrets in life is simply this: do the next right thing.

When life is overwhelming you, when you make wrong decisions, when you step out of line with God, when all is wrong in your life, do the next right thing. You might have been caught up in drugs or other substances - do the next right thing. You might have hurt other people in your life - do the next right thing. You might be caught in the trap of lies, or bad decisions, or immoral actions or whatever has you walking away from God and His will - do the next right thing. It's never too late to give your heart to Jesus.

Walk with God. Give your life to The Lord who died to save you from your sins, your bad decisions, your immoral life, your pain.

- This parable reminds us that we can step from our mistakes. This is a parable of hope - hope for us all
- Third: don't preach one thing, and live another. Jesus told a story which was much like that fork joke - it had an amazing twist - the no Son was the good one - but one repented and lived as he ought. Think about this: if Jesus told this story the normal way - that is in the form of a good three-point story, much like a three point

sermon, there should have been a third son - and he would have not only said yes, but also done it. But that is in a dream world. We all rebel. We all doubt. We are all disobedient. We all miss the mark of God's love because of our sin.

- There is not a third son because we can all found ourselves here, in this story, with the other two sons, who both messed up.
- But let's make a vow today: Let's vow to be truthful. Let's pledge to be men and women of God who walk a worthy walk, where we dare to live as we preach. Let's pledge to be authentic with our lives, to be ourselves before God and others. Jesus said this (Matthew 5:37 NKJV) "*But let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one.*" What does this mean: just say yes and mean it. Turn to God, mean it and live it.

Conclusion:

- Let's try not to say yes, but do nothing, nor to say no, before we do what we should have done long ago.
- Let's say yes and go into all the world to tell the world of our Lord

and Saviour. Let's dare to be authentic and to walk a worthy walk.

Let's dare to be God's own sons and daughters who chose to obey
and then do.

- Let's be certain that we make it clear that we "Do as we preach!"