

## “Which Son Are You?”

Pentecost 19

1)

Matthew 21:28-32

2)

October 18, 2020

May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance. (2 Thess. 3:5)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

How many brothers and sisters do you have? Do you have a sibling? Some of the suggestions that I make in this introduction requires you to think of yourself in relationship to a sibling. If you do not have a sibling, think about a roommate in school or a best friend. There are areas where you are similar – interests or hobbies. But many aspects of personality, you may be different.

I like to look at my strengths and the strengths of others. After all, it wouldn’t be good of me to stand here and tell you about my brother or sisters weaknesses, would it? One sibling likes to talk to people and build up relationships. Another is good at planning and executing. God has given you strengths and a personality. You are able to relate to these two siblings – and see yourself in one and your flesh and blood sibling with different strengths. You might be an oldest sibling or a middle child or a youngest sibling. And you may carry personality tendencies of one of those. Which son are you?

That’s really the question that Jesus wants us to consider this morning? While he does not want you to think of your personality and your strengths, he does want you to consider what is deep down in your heart.

Jesus tells this story, or parable, of two sons in our gospel lesson today. It takes place during the last week of Jesus’ life – during Holy Week. Jesus had ridden into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and now he is about to undergo his suffering and death. And in order to get there, the Chief priests and teachers of the law were again and again trying to trip Jesus up. They were asking him questions, trying to set a trap – to catch him in a lie. These religious leaders thought they were the moral authority on everything.

<sup>28</sup> **“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.’**

<sup>29</sup> “**I will not,**” he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.

<sup>30</sup> “**Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go.**

Imagine you are a parent, a father, who wants his two children to go and rake leaves. One says no I won't. And the other son says, Yes I will. Your kids have other things on their mind – riding their bike or playing video games. You know the feeling as a parent – whether your child is willing or reluctant to do what you ask.

What is Jesus getting at when he tells this parable? Each son had a different identity. One son said no, but reluctantly went. One said yes, but never worked in the field.

You see a contrast in the two children.

Son #1 – No, but ended up going.

- Didn't pay any respect to his father.
- Bluntly said no.

Son #2 – Yes, but did not go

- Paid a great deal of respect by saying, “Sir,” which literally means lord, or master
- Ultimately giving him lip service – telling the father what he wants to hear.
- Every father wants an obedient child – to cut the grass or rake the leaves.

Wasn't that the case of the religious leaders of Jesus' day? Weren't they paying lip service to God? They were putting on an outward show of morality, they came to church every Sabbath, but their hearts were far from God. In their heart, it was all about them and what they did and their actions.

After they responded – the first son is the one who did the Father's will, Jesus went on to tell them –

**Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. <sup>32</sup> 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.**

They know that they are sinners. They know the things that they do, the things that they think in their mind, the words that come out of their mouth are displeasing to the Father. They know they are poor miserable sinners. They repent. They are sorry for their sins. They trust that Jesus is their Savior from sin. Jesus is the only way to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Which Son are You? When we think about this question, we can identify with both sons. But in which ways?

Son # 2 – Yes, but doesn't go

- The outward acts that we try to put on a show for others
  - o Parents try to show their kids good behavior
    - We go to church on Sunday
    - “We have to do this b/c” this is what we should do
  - o We think of all the things we do to be moral, or good people
    - At least at I'm better than my neighbor
    - He sleeps in on Sunday mornings
    - He's out until the wee hours of the morning
    - He doesn't treat his wife or children very well
    - And his kids, they have potty mouths

Bottom line – There are many times that we are like the second son – and we pay lip service to God.

Son #1 – No, but reluctantly

- We know the sins, like the prostitutes and tax collectors, that we commit – that we think or say or do
- The sins that nag and gnaw at us
- We think to ourselves, “If others only knew what I'm guilty of...”

God wants us to look at his Son. Jesus was to be the dying and saving sacrifice to pay for all the sins of the world. He went when

his Father asked. He obeyed his father every time. Not only did he keep all of God’s commands perfectly in our place, he was the one-time and for all sacrifice and substitute as payment for the sins of the entire world. Jesus went to the cross – not b/c hed did something wrong, but b/c he knows the weight of guilt of your sins – and he went to the cross to pay for it all.

Which Son are You? What does God want from us? Not to look to ourselves, but to look to Jesus – the Son who saves us from our sins. And the one who motivates us to, when the Father comes to ask us – will you go and work for me today? – to simply say – Yes, I will go – and then we go. The fields are ripe for the picking – full of people who need to hear the good news of Jesus. Go, knowing that Jesus is with you. Know that Jesus is the cause for you to be there telling others that He is the Son sent to be the Savior of the world. Amen.

Let’s pray – Thank you for giving us this parable to contemplate. We know the sins that are before us, but we also know that you are the one sent to save us from our sins. Move us and motivate us to go and work for you – spreading the good news that you are the Savior of the world. Amen.

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**<sup>29</sup> “ ‘I will not,’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.**

**<sup>30</sup> “Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go.**

**<sup>31</sup> “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. <sup>32</sup> 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.**

The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. (Phil.4:7)