

Sermon - Parable of the Two Sons (Part 1) – Where Is This Coming From?

Preached at Cloverdale, 6/2/24

Matthew 21

²³ And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? ²⁴ And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵ The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? ²⁶ But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. ²⁷ And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

Jesus is interrupted by the Jewish leaders while he is teaching in the temple.

They ask him a question. It is a good question, what is the authority behind what you are doing? Who gave you permission? Where is this coming from?

The question is not wrong...the motivation and purpose behind the question is the problem. Why do you think they are asking this? To discredit or trap him because they feel threatened would be my guess.

They don't really care about the people, they care about themselves and staying in power.

Jesus in his wisdom, responds to their question with another question. I'll answer your question if you can answer a related question. What was the source and authority for John's ministry and baptism....did it come from heaven or from men?

This is important since John was the forerunner or witness to testify about Jesus. If you believe in the ministry and preaching of John the Baptist, then you have to accept his testimony about Jesus and believe.

Why do you think Jesus answers their question with a question?

- It was a way to get them to reflect internally and see their mistake and repent.
- Reveals the nature of their original question to him. If he says his authority is from heaven, they may call him a liar; if he says the authority comes from man, then they will say it is in error or not as powerful because it is not from God.
- For our benefit and example....ask the right questions when dealing with others.

They reason with themselves to justify their actions but not to repent. They consider the consequences of their answers before answering. This is generally wise as we should weigh the outcome of options

before acting. The problem is they are reasoning among themselves rather than discussing this with God and for His glory. See what their reasoning reveals to us:

- They didn't believe in the ministry of John the Baptist. So, they are denying the Gospel.
- They fear the people and their response. Why fear the people? Because they feared losing power and prestige....more concerned with the things of the earth than the Kingdom.
- Today people (in church even) still do things to protect their position and these positions may not line up with kingdom perspectives.
 - We see it in politics, in business, in relationships. You can do the right thing the wrong way.
 - If Jesus were to show up today in America rather than in B.C., there would be a lot of people in power today who would have a problem with Jesus.

They don't answer and so in turn Jesus will also not answer or fall into their trap. Again, their questions are influenced by evil and Christ's questions are designed for their good. So, Christ reaches out in a parable.

“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.

He now follows up with another question and a parable to provide a natural example they can relate to. Why ask a question and use a parable? Because in his mercy he is trying to get them to understand how the Kingdom works.

A man has two sons; both are given the same assignment. Both are to go out and work in the fields to produce and bring forth a harvest. One says no, but repents. The other says yes, but doesn't apply or follow-up his words with action. He says the right things but doesn't produce the desired results.

So he asks a follow-up question that they can easily answer.....which of the two sons did the will of the father? They answer correctly....the first son. The first son.

What do you think of the first son – analysis?

His response is I'm not going to do it.

In the natural, the father reaches out to his son and he doesn't ask, he tells his son to go work in the vineyard.

- They already have a relationship established by birth. It is a blood relationship.

It doesn't say why the son doesn't want to do the will of his father. However, if I put myself in the story, in the natural, I know the reasons I would say no.

- Fear of failure. I might not feel that I'm equipped to handle the task.
- I don't understand why this is important. It doesn't make sense to me.
- I don't see the urgency. Why do I have to do it now, maybe tomorrow.
- It is not on my list of things to do. It wasn't on my plan to do this today. This just messed up my day.
- My will and what I want to do is more important than what my father wants me to do.
- It's not my job, why me, why not have someone else do it.
- I didn't love dad like that on that day to do what he is telling me.
- I just don't want to.

Let's dig deeper....what did the first son have to do in order to do the will of his father?

- First, he has to humble himself and recognize the need to change. That would be picking up the cross. He must see the need to respect his father.
- Next, he has to take the next step and repent or change and take the actual steps and go. He has to actually change his mind about it, and by faith go and leave his original feelings behind.
- He has to have a new attitude that replaces his will and now focuses on doing the will of his father first.
- Actually go to the vineyard and work in a manner that makes his father proud.

Has anyone ever done this or gone through this process? You may not have known you were following the steps of the Gospel of Jesus.

That is the spiritual application for this parable. Let's now see the real-life application to this specific case.

The father in this case study is still God the Father.

The first son, the one who starts out wrong, says all the wrong things, rebels, etc., must represent the sinners who have repented and now believe and are doing the will of the Father. They didn't start out correct, but they finish strong.

Just like in the parable, I have been like this son. There have been times where I have said no to God's will. I didn't want to go minister there, I didn't want to go witnessing, I didn't want to be humble, I didn't want to stop sinning, I didn't want to stop relying on own strength, I didn't want to forgive others, I didn't want to do it God's way.

When I really started to fall in love with God, when I really started to trust Him, that changed. I said yes to His will.

How do I know what the will of God is for my life? Follow the steps and it will be revealed and you will find it in the vineyard. The vineyard is the work of the Kingdom.

The story of cutting my dad's grass.

John 14



¹⁵ If ye love me, keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; ¹⁷ Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

¹⁹ Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

²⁰ At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. ²¹ He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. ²² Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? ²³ Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. ²⁴ He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.



Sermon - Parable of the Two Sons (Part 2) – Changing Your Mind

Preached at Cloverdale, 6/9/24

Matthew 21

Background: Jesus is interrupted by the Jewish leaders while he is teaching in the temple. They ask him a question. It is a good question, what is the authority behind what you are doing? Who gave you permission? Where is this coming from?

The question is not wrong...the motivation and purpose behind the question is the problem. They don't really care about the people, they care about themselves and staying in power.

Jesus in his wisdom, responds to their question with another question. I'll answer your question if you can answer a related question. What was the source and authority for John's ministry and baptism....did it come from heaven or from men?

They reason with themselves to justify their actions but not to repent. The problem is they are reasoning among themselves rather than discussing this with God and for His glory. See what their reasoning reveals to us:

- They didn't believe in the ministry of John the Baptist. So, they are denying the Gospel.
- They fear the people and their response. Why fear the people? Because they feared losing power and prestige....more concerned with the things of the earth than the Kingdom.
- Today people (in church even) still do things to protect their position and these positions may not line up with kingdom perspectives.
 - We see it in politics, in business, in relationships. You can do the right thing the wrong way.

They don't answer and so in turn Jesus will also not answer or fall into their trap. So, Christ reaches out in a parable.

“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.

Last week we discussed the first son. I can easily relate to this first son, because I have in the past disobeyed the will of the Father and at times the will of my dad. But I have arrived at a place in my faith and love of the Father that I can say yes to His will.

I just need to know what His will is. In the parables we learn that it starts with having a right relationship with God and then doing the work in the vineyard to further the Kingdom.

This week we analyze the response and behavior of the second son. Let's look further at this parable.

Now the second son, I can relate to him as well. He says all the right things that the father wants to hear. I believe he really meant what he said (however, he might have been lying from the start). Let's assume however, he was sincere, he really intended to go do a work for his father in the field....why do you think he didn't follow-up? When you said something and didn't follow through, what happened to prevent you from keeping your word?

The parable doesn't state why the second son didn't do the will of his father. But in the natural, I had a dad, so when I acted like this son, there were various reasons why I ended up not doing the will of my father.

- Cares of life, other priorities jumped in front of it.
- I forgot.
- I didn't mean to do it in the first place...just wanted to get dad off my back or buy a little time.
- Keep putting it off, I really meant to, but kept trying to get around to it but never did.
- Didn't think I could handle the job, waiting for help or the right time.
- Changed my mind.
- Peer pressure, especially after I left home.
- I just didn't understand.
- Thought I could look the part but not actually have to do it. Looking good and righteous on the outside, but crooked on the inside.
- Fear.

Whatever the reasons I had, they were never justification for not doing the will of my father. Today, I still can't find a good reason.

Question, what would the second son now have to do in order to do the will of his father?

Answer....follow the same steps the first son did.

- First, he has to humble himself and recognize the need to change. That would be picking up the cross. He must see the need to respect his father.
- Next, he has to take the next step and repent or change and take the actual steps and go. He has to actually change his mind about it, and by faith go and leave his self-righteousness behind.
- He has to have a new attitude that replaces his will and now focuses on doing the will of his father first.

- Actually go to the vineyard and work in a manner that makes his father proud.

Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, 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.

So, now Jesus follows up the parable (a natural story) with a spiritual application....oh how he loves you and me.

He basically says sinners like tax collectors and prostitutes who they must have easily identified as sinners....are entering the kingdom of heaven ahead of the self-righteous temple attending folks. How can that happen? John came as the forerunner to Christ and told them how to follow the first 3-4 steps. They didn't believe him. They admitted to themselves they didn't believe.

Jesus says that the sinners did believe him. Again, the religious people acknowledge that the people believed John was a prophet and they followed the steps sincerely into baptism and new life. They are His beloved sons/daughters in whom God is well pleased through sincere baptism.

Finally, he includes them and calls them out by saying they see and know this but still refuse to follow the steps and believe. Notice the order Jesus uses, repenting and then believing.

Now, let's go back to the parable and connect the dots.

In the parable, who does the father represent? God the father.

Who do the two sons represent? Us and the different responses we have.

What does the vineyard represent? The field, the church, the place(s) where the Father wants us to work and do His will in the earth.

That is the spiritual application for this parable. Let's now see the real-life application to this specific case.

The first son, the one who starts out wrong, says all the wrong things, rebels, etc., must represent the sinners who have repented and now believe and are doing the will of the Father. They didn't start out correct, but they finish strong.

The second son must represent the Scribes and Pharisees. They start out correct, seem good on the outside. Say all the right things. But they are hypocrites....because they don't follow what they say they believe and ultimately do not please or do the will of the Father and will not change. Why, because change requires recognizing the need to change and they are too self-righteous and protective of their status to ever admit they are wrong and need to repent.



I look good coming to church, but I'm not trying to go beyond church to do the will of the Father. This is good enough.

So, the ones they call sinners will enter the Kingdom first. The first shall be last and the last shall be first....again.

The Father, still today calls His children to believe and do His will in the world. You can't please the Father and do his will without first recognizing the need, changing your mind and putting the needs of the Father ahead of your needs, and by faith going out and doing those things.....actually doing those things and going to the place to put that work in.

Question – which son do you think you are? Do you know how to always be consistently the son who does the will of the Father?

Notes from the Commentaries:

- The point of this parable is clear. What matters is living for God, not saying the right words. The religious leaders were good at talking righteous talk, but their stubbornly unrepentant hearts showed that repentant sinners would **enter the kingdom before** them.

Matthew Henry – 1 Cor 3:19

- The gospel call to work in the vineyard, requires present obedience; *Son, go work to-day*, while it is called to-day, because *the night comes when no man can work*. We were not sent into the world to be idle, nor had we daylight given us to play by; and therefore, if ever we mean to do any thing for God and our souls, why not now? Why not to-day?
- He that told his father to his face, that he *would not* do as he bid him, deserved to be turned out of doors, and disinherited; but our God *waits to be gracious*, and, notwithstanding our former follies, if we repent and mend, will favourably accept of us; blessed be God, we are under a covenant that leaves room for such a repentance.

Finally, we may be okay holistically, but where are we situationally?

- We might say overall that we are believers and doing the will of God, but there still may be areas, situations, things, etc., where God's will is not being performed in our lives.
- We need to determine what is God's will in these situations and areas of our life.
- For example, you may be a believer, but you may have a hard time forgiving someone even though we know that is God's will.
- If these areas exist in your life, which child are you? The one that obeys God's will, or the one who will not obey?