

The Parables of Jesus #39
The Parable of the Two Sons
(Mt 21:28-32)
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INTRODUCTION

A. Recent events leading up to this parable

1. Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem
2. Jesus drove the money changers out of the temple
3. Jesus performed miracles of healing in the temple

B. Reaction of the religious leaders

1. 21:15 -- they were indignant
2. 21:23 -- they challenged the authority by which he did all these things
3. They were dishonest and hypocritical

C. It was, once again, in response to the “religious” that Jesus told a story

1. It is a story that condemns the “appearance” of faithfulness that exists only on the surface
2. It is also a story of hope for those who, because of past sins, have thought that a relationship with God is impossible

I. THE PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS (Mt: 21:28-32)

A. A father's family

1. The man had two sons
2. It's a story set up with a clear contrast in mind

B. The father's request to the first son

1. Son, go to work in my vineyard
2. The first son flatly refused
 - a. perhaps he didn't want to work
 - b. perhaps he had other things to do
 - c. maybe he was lazy
 - d. perhaps he was simply rebellious
 - e. whatever the reason, he rejected his father's request

3. Later, he regretted his refusal and went to work in the vineyard
 - a. some versions say that he “repented” -- METAMELOMAI
 - b. normal word for “repentance” is METANOIA and means a change of mind
 - c. METAMELOMAI might best be translated by “remorse” or “regret” -- indicating a change in one’s concerns or interests
 - d. note the following uses of METAMELOMAI
 - 1) Matt 27:3 -- Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was **remorseful** and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, (NKJ)
 - 2) 2 Cor 7:8 -- For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not **regret** it; though I did **regret** it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while. (NKJ)
 - 3) Heb 7:21 -- (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: ""The Lord has sworn and will not **relent**, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek' "), (NKJ)

C. The father’s request to the second son

1. Son, go to work in my vineyard
2. This son readily agreed
3. The only problem is that he didn’t go work in the vineyard
 - a. did he have good intentions but never got around to actually fulfilling them?
 - b. did he simply lie to his father?
 - c. did he think he knew how to appease his father with external obedience only?
 - d. did he get caught up in other things?
4. Whatever the reason, there is a clear contrast between the two sons
 - a. one refused -- later regretted his refusal -- went to work
 - b. one agreed -- but never actually did what he said he would do

D. The application of the story

1. Jesus asked the chief priests and elders -- “Which of the two did the will of his father?”
 - a. not even these leaders could miss the answer
 - b. it was obviously the one who actually went and worked, even though he had at first refused

2. Jesus to the religious leaders -- tax collectors and harlots will enter the kingdom before you
 - a. the basis of this conclusion was the response of two groups, (sinners) and (religious leaders) to the preaching of John the Baptist
 - b. John came in the way of righteousness
 - 1) tax collectors and prostitutes experienced remorse over their sins -- they believed what John preached
 - 2) religious leaders did not believe John, didn't respond to John -- they experienced no remorse over sin
 - 3) which of the two groups had done the will of the Father?

II. LESSONS TO LEARN

A. The preaching of God's truth demands a response

1. Both Paul and James makes similar points on this
 - a. Rom 2:13 -- (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; (NKJ)
 - b. James 1:23-24 -- For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. (NKJ)
2. I fear that too often we hear only with our ears, but not with our minds and emotions

B. External response is often all that people give to God

1. Titus 1:15-16 -- To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work. (NKJ)
 - a. how does a person profess to know God and yet end up being described as abominable, disobedient, disqualified
 - b. because while their mouths claim to know him, their actions deny him

2. I Jn 3:18-19 -- My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. (NKJ)
 - a. here's the positive admonition -- do not love in word or tongue, but in deed and truth
 - b. that's how we know we are of the truth and find assurance before God

C. This is why the elements of belief and action make up true faith

1. Heb 3:12ff (read)
 - a. we can have an evil heart of unbelief, and end up leaving God
 - b. there are three keys
 - 1) it is something that concerns "today" not something that can be put off until some other day
 - 2) do allow your heart to become hard -- by refusing to respond to God's will for your life
 - 3) disobedience and unbelief are inseparable partners of destruction, but belief and obedience are inseparable partners of doing God's will
2. 2 Cor 6:1-2 -- We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: ""In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. (NKJ)
 - a. there is a reason why passages like these stress the importance of a response from us "today"
 - b. but it's not a response of words of agreement, it's a response of action and participation in God's will with our lives

CONCLUSION

A. The obvious question is, "How will you respond?"

1. There's the easy external answer -- "Sure, I'll do it!"
2. There's the more difficult internal answer -- that might be a "no" at first, but after reconsidering, does God's will

B. The question "when" is important

1. Why not today?
2. Do you realize the heart-hardening effect of continuing to put it off?
3. If you've refused in the past, perhaps rethinking God's will will cause you to feel remorse for having never obeyed him
4. You can change that first answer to the one he really wants from you

C. Invitation