

**Title:** A Tale of Two Sons

**Passage:** Matthew 21:28-31

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Draft Summary:

- I. The parabolic sons (v. 28-30)
  - he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went
  - he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go
- II. The piercing question (v. 31a)
  - Which of the two did the will of his father?
  - They said, "The first."
- III. The painful truth (v. 31b-32)
  - Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you.
  - For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

Possible Discussion Questions:

- What point(s) in the sermon did the Lord most impress upon you?
  - As asked of the Sanhedrin: What do you think about Jesus?
  - How is the doctrine of sin really the doctrine of love?
  - What next steps will you take in response to the sermon?
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## **EXPOSITION**

**Context of Passage:**

Fork in the road

- Repentance
- Obedience
- Belief
  - Many talk of it but do not actually reflect or do it.

Matthew 4:17

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Matthew 21:23 (The Authority of Jesus Challenged)

And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?"

- what follows are three parables that makes clear the distinction between those who are repentant and those who are not.

### **Passage:**

Matthew 21:28-32

"What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went. And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

### **Overview**

- I. The parabolic sons (v. 28-30)
- II. The piercing question (v. 31a)
- III. The painful truth (v. 31b-32)

## **I. THE PARABOLIC SONS (v.28-30)**

### ***"But what do you think?"***

#### *Earlier context*

Matthew 21:24-27

Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?" And they discussed it among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From man,' we are afraid of the

crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet." So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

- Religious leaders: "We do not know"
- Jesus follows up directly: "What do you think?"
  - We will all answer this question.

Parables

- Imply that the Sanhedrin know that Jesus is heaven's heir.
  - But they instead want Jesus' position and authority. Instead of honoring the Messiah, they choose to reject.

***A man had two sons,***

- Father = represents God

***and he came to the first***

- God approaches sinners. Sinners never seek God on their own.

Psalms 14:1-3

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is none who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.

Psalms 53:1-3

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, doing abominable iniquity; there is none who does good. God looks down from heaven on the children of man to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all fallen away; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.

Romans 3:10-12

as it is written:

"None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

***and said, 'Son, go work today in the vineyard.' "***

- God has all authority and control over His dominion. He is over the vineyard.

Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

- What's our response to God's authority? Go!

*Vineyard*

- represents Israel.
- Leaders are supposed to take care of Israel.

***And he answered and said, 'I will not';***

- First son's response
- "I will not" = "I no want to"
  - Direct disobedience to the father's face.
- sinful response

***but afterward he regretted it and went.***

- regretted = his heart was converted
  - Passive tense. Someone else changes his mind.
    - Picture of repentance
- Other translation: "as his heart was converted, he went"
- Repentance
  - Is truly a grace from God.
  - You don't cause repentance. God does.
  - not merely an emotional response.
  - also involves willful action
- Conviction
  - It is not repentance
    - Unrepentant sinners feel conviction but fail to act and turn.

***“And the man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered and said, ‘I will, sir’; but he did not go.***

- the second son’s response
- Disobeys his father behinds his back.
  - Also sinful response.
- Both the religious and irreligious are dead and sinful.

## **II. THE PIERCING QUESTION (v. 31a)**

“Which of the two did the will of his father?”

- but both had sinned.
  - Who can obey the father’s will
    - Those who repent.
- The Gospel is a command to obey, repent, belief, and act.

Romans 10:16

But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?”

John 6:28-29

Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

John 3:36

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Matthew 18:12-14

What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

- Are you lost?
  - You come to church but have you believed?
- Misperception: I am lost because I wander.
  - God is unwilling to let any of his repentant ones will perish.
- Repentance

- Turn your eyes to Jesus.

Matthew 7:21-23

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

- False disciples
  - Look at our words:
    - "says to me, 'Lord, Lord'
  - Look at our acts:
    - "prophesy...cast our demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name"
- True disciples
  - Look at Jesus.

Colossians 3:1-2

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

Hebrews 12:2

looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

***They \*said, "The first."***

- recognized the first son
  - He had the repentant heart.
- First son, while evil, God accepted his delayed obedience.

### **III. THE PAINFUL TRUTH (v.31b-32)**

***Jesus \*said to them, "Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you.***

- directed at the religious leaders
  - First time Jesus applied a parable at them.

- Question: do we see the doctrine of sin as a doctrine of love?
  - We know about sin so that we repent and live

Matthew 10:2-3

The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;

- Matthew pointed to his past of sin as a tax collector.

Mark 2:15-17

And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Luke 18:10-14

"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

Luke 23:34

And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.

Luke 23:39-43

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

- the criminal on the cross who began mocking Jesus turned in repentance and was accepted.

***For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him;***

Who was the greatest prophet in the Old Testament?

- John the Baptist.
  - But wasn't he in the New Testament?
    - He was actually still under the Old Covenant.

Matthew 11:9-11

What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written,

“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,  
who will prepare your way before you.’

Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

- He was the only prophet to which Old Testament prophets talked about and he Himself also pointed to the Messiah.

Matthew 11:13-14

For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.

- Jesus condemns the Sanhedrin based on John the Baptist.
  - They did not believe John the Baptist.
  - What did he say? Repent! The kingdom of heaven is here!

***but the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him; and you, seeing this, did not even regret afterward so as to believe him***

## **APPLICATION**

For the unbeliever:

- Repent and believe.
  - Do not merely hear the gospel
  - Do not merely see other sinners repent and see transformative work of the Gospel but not regret one's disbelief.



For the believer

Matthew 11:11

Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

- “least in the kingdom of heaven”
  - one who knows Jesus Christ.
    - Greater than John the Baptist.
- May we endeavor to be in God’s Word to be superior evangelists. This is God’s will so we are light to a dying world.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.