

Gospel: Matthew 21:28-32

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people:  
"What is your opinion?  
A man had two sons.  
He came to the first and said,  
'Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.'  
He said in reply, 'I will not,'  
but afterwards changed his mind and went.  
The man came to the other son and gave the same order.  
He said in reply, 'Yes, sir, 'but did not go.  
Which of the two did his father's will?"  
They answered, "The first."  
Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you,  
tax collectors and prostitutes  
are entering the kingdom of God before you.  
When John came to you in the way of righteousness,  
you did not believe him;  
but tax collectors and prostitutes did.  
Yet even when you saw that,  
you did not later change your minds and believe him."

Homily: Are You Humble Enough to Put On Christ?

The key to understanding today's gospel parable is the first line. "Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people." He's talking to the religious elite and the parable is aimed squarely at that gap between what they preach and what they practice; who they say they are and who they are.

Fr. Mike Class, our Executive Director here at Bellarmine, is fond of telling the following story when he was studying his theology at the Jesuit school of theology (which is right next to Harvard). He took a preaching class at Harvard and the chaplain at Divinity School was a very eloquent preacher and after one particularly powerful homily a woman came up to him and said, "Reverend, I hope you practice what you preach." And he said, "Madam, I assure you I only preach what I practice."

Would that we could all say that. As we hear this gospel parable today, it's not simply about looking back historically and saying, "Oh those religious hypocrites back then." It's about looking at ourselves who are trying to grow in holiness and recognizing that it's so much easier to see the flaw in another than it is to see the inconsistencies in our self. If you have a spot of mud on your face, or I have a spot of mud on my face, I can't see it. But if you have one on your face, I can look and I can easily and readily see it. It's only when we look in the mirror of truth, that we can see who we really are. It's so much easier to see the flaws in someone else than in ourselves. It reminds me of the story of a woman who was aging, but she felt that she was holding up pretty well and her one dentist retired and she got a new dentist. And the dentist had different rooms and he was going from one room to the other and as she was waiting for him, she

noticed a diploma on his side wall that was from the high school that she graduated. It caught her eye and she got up out of the chair and she walked over and looked at it. She recognized the name; It was the name of a man whom she had rather fancied when she was in high school. He was tall, dark, and handsome. He was an athlete. He was a scholar. He was eloquent. He was very bright. She had a secret crush on him. She said, "I wonder if that could be him?" She sat back down in the chair and a few moments later this balding, bearded, be-spectacled man with a potbelly and a shuffle walked in and she said, "No, I don't think that could be him." She thought, just to be sure, just to be sure, and she said, "I noticed your diploma on the wall, what years were you at the high school?" And he mentioned the years and she said, "Well what a coincidence, I was at the school at that same time. And he looked at her and he said, "Really, what did you teach?"

It's always easier to look at the other, isn't it? It's easier than looking in the mirror of truth and seeing ourselves. Look at this parable of two children; two sons or two daughters. There is a third son isn't there? And it's the one St. Paul talks about in his letter to the Philippians today. It's the one who gathers us together. It's the one whom we look to. It's that third child who says what he means and does what he says. And that word to us is always love. The word is always mercy. And it's not simply a word on his lips, it's embodied in the actions of his life. Scholars tell us that the heart of this letter from Paul to the Philippians Ch. 2 is an ancient Christian hymn that was actually incorporated into the liturgy:

*Having you the same mind as Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at, rather he emptied himself and took the form of a slave. He was humbler yet.*

Put on the mind of Christ. Twice in today's gospel we hear the words of the first son who objected and said, "I won't go," but who changed his mind. And then Jesus turns the parable back on the chief priests and elders and he says, "Even when you saw that the worst of the worst in society, the tax collectors and prostitutes, changed their mind, you would not change your mind." Which is why St. Paul says in our second reading today, "Change your mind. Change your attitude. Put on the mind of Christ. Put on the heart of Christ. Become the face of Christ within this world today by being humbler yet."

I read a really scary survey recently on young millennial's; young adults today in their 20s and 30s. The survey asked, "What your major life goals? And 80% of the young adults today answered, "My major life goal is to become rich." And of those another 50% answered, "My second major life goal is to become famous." It's almost a caricature, isn't it? Rich and Famous.

We know that they're heading toward a major speed bump in their life. Again, at Harvard University, there was a multigenerational study, perhaps you've read of this, the happiness study. It was conducted over 70 years with close to 800 people. Two generations of researchers at Harvard carried this on and the question they asked was rather simple, "What makes for happiness?" And they studied close to 800 people over 70 years and they came up with a rather simple conclusion. It's the relationships in our lives that are satisfying that make for happiness. Those who had strong, tight, loving relationships within their families and among their friends, had better health mentally and physically and reported themselves as statistically, significantly

more happy than those whose relationships had eroded. It wasn't their money. It wasn't their degrees. It wasn't even how often they went to church. What made the difference, was whether the values of their lives translated into relationships that nurtured them. That's what sustains us, these relationships, which are rooted in love.

It is love that forms itself in so many different ways, that expresses itself in so many different ways. But we who gather together in this celebration we call Eucharist, Thanksgiving, we pray for the grace to be able to put on the mind of Christ.

*Though he was in the form of God he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at but emptied himself. We're not God.*

We pray as we look in the mirror of truth and we see who we really are that we can look to the one who created us (and who recreates us) to be humble enough to say, "I have got to put on a new mind, put on a new attitude. I want Christ Jesus to live within me.

Amen. (Amen).