

LIVING IN THE KINGDOM

Learning from the Parables & Practice of Jesus (Part 6)

The Two Sons

Matthew 21: 28-32, 42-46; Matthew 7:16-23

Introduction

- ❖ Now: The temple courts during Holy Week
- ❖ Before: The Triumphal Entry. The Clearing of the Temple. The Cursing of the Fig Tree. The Debate with the Chief Priests and Elders over Authority.

²⁸"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.'

Genuine Love/Family (God and others)
+ Meaningful Work (use of gifts)
= Vocation

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?"

Ezekiel 18:21-24: "But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die. None of the offenses he has committed will be remembered against him. Because of the righteous things he has done, he will live. Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign Lord. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live? But if a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits sin and does the same detestable things the wicked man does, will he live? None of the righteous things he has done will be remembered. Because of the unfaithfulness he is guilty of and because of the sins he has committed, he will die."

"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. ³²For 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.

Proverbs 8:20 – “I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice.”

Proverbs 12:28 – “In the way of righteousness there is life; along that path is immortality.”

“By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven... Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” (Matthew 7:16-23)

**⁴²Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?
⁴³"Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. ⁴⁴He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."**

- ❖ The Kingdom of God is not a verbal or intellectual formulation; it is a way of obedience to the King.
- ❖ The King’s commandments will either be the foundation stones – “the rock” -- on which we purposefully and practically build our lives, or else they will be stones we reject, preferring to go our own way.

⁴⁵When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them. ⁴⁶They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

Two possible responses to Christ’s call to obedient followership.

1. We can “fall on” the stone of His life and commandments. i.e. throw ourselves down upon Christ in humility and obedience, have our old way of life “broken to pieces” so that Christ can rebuild it properly. (The first son, the tax-collectors and prostitutes)
2. We can (like the second son) reject practical obedience to Christ’s commandments, thinking that we are pursuing an easier or better way – when the reality is that one day the very Rock that could have been our new foundation will become the landslide that falls down upon us. (The second son, chief priests and elders)

Genuine transformation occurs through a combination of three factors: (Dallas Willard)

1. Vision – a picture of an alternative life
2. Intention – a will to pursue the alternative
3. Means – a practical pathway by which to start walking.