

Parable of the Two Sons

Matthew 21:28-32

INTRODUCTION:

1. As seen in some of the parables, Jesus often responded to questions from His disciples with a parable
 - a. Cf. **"The Unmerciful Servant" (Mt 18:21-35)**, in reply to a question about forgiveness
 - b. Cf. **"The Laborers In The Vineyard" (Mt 20:1-16)**, in reply to a question about what disciples would receive who have given up all to follow Jesus
2. He also used parables in replying to some of the challenges by those who opposed Him
 - a. During His final week in Jerusalem, He was challenged by religious leaders - **Mt 21:23-27**
 - b. In response, He told three parables...
 - 1) **"The Two Sons" - Mt 21:28-32**
 - 2) **"The Wicked Vinedressers" - Mt 21:33-46**
 - 3) **"The Wedding Feast" - Mt 22:1-14**

[In this lesson, we shall focus our attention on the parable of **"The Two Sons" (Mt 21:28-32)**, looking first at...]

I. THE PARABLE AND ITS EXPLANATION

A. THE PARABLE ITSELF IS QUITE SIMPLE...

1. It is an account of a man with two sons and a vineyard
2. The father tells his two sons to work in the vineyard
 - a. The first son says he won't go, but later regretted it and went
 - b. The second son said he would, but did not actually go

B. JESUS EXPLAINS THE PARABLE...

1. He begins with a question: **"Who of the two did the will of his father?"**
2. The answer is obvious, and the religious leaders reply **"The first"**
3. Jesus' reply to the religious leaders is then very direct
 - a. **"Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you."**
 - b. **"For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots**

believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him.”

4. Jesus was applying this parable to the religious leaders of His day
 - a. They were like the second son, who said he would go, but didn't
 - b. Whereas those tax collectors and harlots who repented at the preaching of John were like the first son, who first said no, but then went
5. It must have been a shock to hear Jesus tell them that those despised by the Jews would enter the kingdom of God before their religious leaders!
6. But as Luke records in his gospel...
 - a. The tax collectors (and others) who accepted John's baptism **"justified God"**
 - b. Whereas those religious leaders who were not baptized **"rejected the counsel of God for themselves" - Lk 7:29-30**

[Jesus will have more to say concerning these religious leaders in His next two parables, but what important lesson can we draw from this parable for us today?]

II. APPLYING THE PARABLE TODAY

A. THE MAIN POINT OF THE PARABLE...

1. Is it not that we must be **"doers"** and not **"sayers"**?
2. **"The doing of the will of God is the one thing needful."**
3. Jesus emphasized this truth on other occasions as well:
 - a. In His Sermon on the Mount - **Mt 7:21-27**
 - b. In giving The Great Commission before His ascension to heaven - **Mt 28:20**
4. As John Stott wrote: **"Greatness in the kingdom of God is measured in terms of obedience."** (Authentic Christianity)

B. THIS LESSON IS ONE SORELY NEEDED TODAY...

1. The doctrines of "cheap grace" and "easy believism" have created a generation of "sayers" and not "doers"
 - a. Many profess Jesus as Lord, but then don't do what He says - cf. **Lk 6:46**
 - b. They are like the second son, who says he will do the father's will, but doesn't
2. Misunderstanding the doctrine of "salvation by grace through faith", many people have concluded that requiring obedience to God's command is "legalism" or "salvation by works of merit"
 - a. Yet nothing could be further from the truth!

- b. Keeping the commandments of God is essential to salvation
- **Mt 7:21-23; 28:20; Jn 14:15,21,23; 15:10,14; 1 Co 7:19; 1 Jn 2:3-4**
- 3. What we must remember is this...
 - a. When we keep God's commandments, we in no way earn or merit salvation
 - b. We simply do that which is our duty to do, and always remain "unprofitable servants" saved by grace - cf. **Lk 17:10; Ti 3:4-7**
 - c. Yet, we still **"should be careful to maintain good works"!**
- **Ti 3:1,8,14**

CONCLUSION

- 1. Remember that it was the "religious leaders" in Jesus' day...
 - a. Who **"rejected the counsel of God for themselves"** in not accepting John's teaching for the need for repentance and baptism
 - b. Who likely believed that they had good "theological grounds" for not heeding the simple commands of God given through His preachers
- 2. In similar fashion, many "religious leaders" of our day...
 - a. Reject the clear teaching of Christ and His apostles concerning the commands to repent and be baptized - cf. **Mk 16:15-16; Ac 2:38**
 - b. They reject the "counsel of God for themselves" based upon "theological grounds"
-- When the common man who reads without preconceived notions has no problem understanding what the Scriptures teach on the subject
- 3. Could it be that today there are many people (even "tax collectors" and "harlots") who will enter the kingdom of God before many religious people do?

What kind of "son" are you? One who does the will of his Father? Or one who says he will, but in the end does not? How you respond to the commands of our Lord determines the difference...

God's Plan for Man's Salvation