



26th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME YEAR A – October 1, 2017

In today's gospel (Matthew 21:28-32) Jesus tells us about two sons who say one thing and do another. Their father asks them to work in his vineyard. The vineyard is an image of the kingdom of God. One son said yes but he does not go into the vineyard. The other son said no, but he goes. Which of the two *did* the Father's will. The point is that we have to *do* God's will in order to get into the kingdom of God. Talking the "talk" and not walking the "walk" will not get us into heaven. Consider the passage in the letter of St. James (James 2:14-26). Faith without good works is dead.

Jesus told this parable in the temple in Jerusalem just days before the leaders would arrest him and put him to death. For three years he had been preaching a simple message - reform, reshape, refashion your life (μετάνοια). It was public sinners like the tax-collectors and prostitutes who responded to his invitation. The religious leaders of his time, the scribes and Pharisees, opposed the message. They preferred the old wine - their own rules and rituals. They put together heavy burdens to put on other people's backs and did nothing to help them (Matthew 23:4)

The parable likens the tax-collectors and prostitutes to the son who first said no but later did what the father asked him to do. The Pharisees and scribes are like the son who enthusiastically said yes but never went into the vineyard. They did not *do* the will of their Father. They did their own will.

You can find some people who are not church goers, but when there is an injustice in the community, they are the first to stand up and say so. When there are people out in the cold they will be the first to donate a blanket. Wherever there is famine or earthquake they will deny themselves some pleasure in life, in order to help the victims. They get it...they do God's work in the "*vineyard*".

There are some others who come to church every Sunday and say to God, "Amen! We believe! We love you!" They wear badges and medals as ways of professing their faith. They follow all the rituals, sing all the right songs, come away from Mass feeling good, but when it comes to helping others after Mass, they have no time...and in some instances, they have no desire to put their faith into action. Hopefully, they are few in number.

In our first Reading, we hear, "*Our Lord's way is fair*" (Ezekiel 18:25-28). The word of God 600 years before Jesus was born applies to all of us 2000 years after Jesus ascended into heaven. We need to turn away from our "wickedness" and do what is right and just. This dimension of life on earth is a time of purgation. We need to use it wisely. We are "*in the vineyard*" to help each other.

Jesus says, "Not all those who *say* to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but *only* those who *do* the will of my Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). So what is the will of our Father in heaven? Prayerfully read the second reading again (Phil 2:1-5). Do you "...*look out for the interest of others as well as for yourself*..."?

Our eternal destiny depends on what we *do*. Someone once said, "Show me what you do and I can tell you what you believe". Is *your* faith alive?

