

Two Sons and the Vineyard

Matthew 13:34 *“All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them.”*

The Two Sons and the Vineyard

Matt 21:28-32 *“But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. 29 He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. 30 And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. 31 Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. 32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.”*

Matthew 21:28-32 provides us the scripture for this parable. Christ speaks this parable to the chief priests and the elders as they are assembled in the temple, Matthew 21:23. After they hear the parable of verse 28-32 and the parable that follows it beginning in verse 33, they are greatly disturbed. They seek to harm, even perhaps kill, the Lord. The truth He spoke cut them. This brings us to the truth of today's preaching. Preachers are very careful to avoid the truth so that they do not hurt anyone's feelings. Christ's audience got their feelings hurt by this parable.

In this parable we learn what we should well know, that is, not everyone will be obedient to the commands of the Lord. Knowing this fact, it is conflicting that modern religion seeks feverishly to fit every person into a religious setting comfortable to them. Like trying on clothes, “you look good in red and you look good in blue.” Rest assured, not all men or even very many men, will follow the commands of Father God. Often religious Pharisees refuse his sayings, and the publicans and harlots repent and obey. In this parable we have two sons; one heeds the father, and the other does not.

There is a *father* in this parable. The character spoken of as *certain man* in verse 28 is the *father*. Father has two sons. The terms *sons* speaks of a birth relationship. This father gives us a picture of the Heavenly Father. The sons, being the father's by birth, give us a picture God's sons, the *saved*. The father asked service of the sons. God does not ask service of those who are not His sons, that is, those not saved. Thus, the two sons do *not* represent the lost, but represent the *saved*. One son obeys the father and one disobeys the father, but they are *both* sons. Not all of God's children obey Him.

This parable speaks of a vineyard. The vineyard is the field of labor. The father requests some help of the sons in the vineyard. Has your earthly father ever said to you "boys, I need some help?" The father needed some labor performed. Do you understand the word *labor* or do you only understand the word *rejoicing*? Very few celebrations take place in a vineyard, for it is a place of *labor*. What are you doing in God's vineyard? God has the right to call on you to labor if you are his son. And, I predict, He will call on you to help at some time in your saved life. Today's church is on strike or taking a fifty-year vacation.

The father owns the vineyard. The vineyard does not belong to you, the Baptists, the Methodists, or any denomination or preacher. It belongs to God. Everyone is equal in the vineyard. You may be taller than me and can reach the grapes on the highest branches, but I can pick grapes on the lower branches. There is not one redeemed person that cannot be used as a laborer in the vineyard.

The ground is level in the vineyard, for all carry one title- sons. Since God owns the vineyard, He is the supervisor, or boss, of the vineyard. Some always seek to give others an assignment in the vineyards. There are usually plenty of bosses in a church. God will never put something in your heart to assign someone else to do (read this sentence again before you proceed). You are not the boss- God is. I do not see how God could have set up the "work of the Lord" any simpler. The father owns the vineyard. The vineyard is the field of labor. The father births sons into his family to perform the required labor in the vineyard. God the father is the supervisor. There is a place for everyone. In fact, there are more vines than there are sons willing to work.

The father needs workers in the vineyard. To be sure, God does not need help nor has he ever. He is doing fine. The *vineyard* needs help. So, when the vineyard needs help, God turns to His sons, not to the neighbors. Sinners don't witness, pass out Gospel tracts, mow the church lawn or clean the House of Worship.

The first son

God says to the first son "*Son, go work today in my vineyard.*" Is there anything about the word *work* that needs explaining? To some, the entire measure of the world of Christianity is how much they get to rejoice. Don't misunderstand- I love to rejoice in the Lord. Funny thing is, my rejoicing seems to follow on the heels of labor. Israel toiled in great anguish growing the crops. Then, they rejoiced when the harvest was gathered into the barn. You will rejoice when you have finished your labor. You may say "I haven't felt good in the Lord in a long time." Could it be that you are behind in your labor God has given you to do? You can shout when you come to church if you are caught up on all your chores.

Did you happen to see the word *today* in the father's command to the son in verse 28? What are you waiting for? *Today* means now. *Tomorrow* is never now. When my father told me to mow the grass *now*, it meant today. If you are retired, *today* still means now. If you are a newborn Christian, *today* means now. If you have been saved 5 years, *today* still means now. The God who teaches us to believe He is coming for us *today* is not going to give you an assignment to do *tomorrow*. My father was a man of great faith, Pastor G. D. Hogan. He is in Heaven now. He stated that if God called him to go minister in Africa, he would get in his car, drive to the airport, purchase a ticket, and board the plane to Africa. He did not believe God would call you *today* for a job He needed done *next month or next year*.

The father speaks to the first son. He requested that he go labor, and the reply was "*I will not.*" He answered the father rather bluntly. In fact, this sounds like a rude and defiant answer. But before you criticize this son, remember that we have all told the Lord "no" at some point in our Christian life. Further, there is not a good way to say "no" to the heavenly Father. If you know of a way, share it with me. *No* means *no*. In fact, there is something to be said about the honesty of this son. I admire him far more than the second son that we will observe in just a moment. We know exactly where this son

stands. There is no hypocrisy or pretension about him. He answered “*I will not.*” He did not give the church member answer:

I will if I have some free time
I will if you can’t get anybody else
I will if I don’t forget
I will if I can get to it
I will after I finish with what I have to do
I will if _____ (fill in the blank)

It would be better if you would just be honest with God and tell Him “no.” Then He could get someone who would say “yes.”

The second son

Let us move to the second son, and we will later return to the first. After the first son refused, the Lord turned to the second son with the same request in verse 30. Don’t miss the point that the father didn’t quit just because the first son turned Him down. You go ahead and tell God “no” when He calls on you. You won’t shut God down. He has other sons he can call on. Go ahead and make excuses for not helping God. He will find someone who will, and you will miss a reward.

The second son replied “*I go sir and went not.*” He said one thing and then acted in another direction. Don’t criticize him. Truth is, we lie to God all the time. We make pledges to God in prayer with no intentions of doing anything. “Preacher, how do you know I do not have good intentions?” People who do not pray each day, study the Bible daily, and attend church faithfully unless sick don’t have good intentions. You sure aren’t going to get your hands dirty in a vineyard.

This man was a hypocrite and, in fact, a liar. I think it would be better to tell God “no” than to lie to Him. This will be decided later in our discussion. The son concealed before the father his determination not to obey him. He was not an honest person. It wasn’t as if he pledged to the father to help Him next week and then forgot. That is why God ask us *today* to do things *today* because we as humans forget. If you ever pledge to God to work for Him, you will have an assignment that *same* day. God will move on you in some way that very day, for He is looking for laborers to work

today, today, today! Everybody plans to get involved tomorrow, but tomorrow never comes.

This second son was religious. Many profess to be so much for God. Outwardly he was correct and righteous and ready to do a work for the father. Inwardly he was destitute and void of the true desire to do the father's will. Eccl 5:5 "*Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay.*"

What was the father to do?

It appears the father has a real problem. The first son said "no," though he will later change his mind. The second son said "yes" but lied. *If* God has a problem, it is lack of laborers. What is the father to do? Neither you nor I can put God out of business. Go ahead and sit on the stool of "do nothing." Go ahead and fulfill your lust and desires watching TV. The father looked out the window. Behold there in the vineyard pruning and gathering fruit or doing whatever task needed attention, was the first son. The work was getting done.

What happened to the first son! I thought he said "no?" Verse 29 says after some thought, he repented and went to work. God gives *second chances*. God is a God of mercy. He permits *u-turns*. He graciously permits us to change our mind. If you have told God "no," more than likely he will give you a second chance. He has me. He is merciful. Will He give you a third or fourth chance? I doubt He will.

The first son, who at first said "no," later that day went to work. The need was "*today*" according to the scripture. The boy never waited 20 years. He went *tha t* day. "Preacher, I have been backslid 20 years." No you haven't- you have never been a son. Don't put God off. He truly needs helpers today, that is, NOW.

After his parable of the sons, Christ spoke to His audience the question of verse 31. The question is "*which son did the will of the father?*" They answered "*the first.*" They were correct in their answer. The truth is simple- it is better to tell God "no" and later repent and go to work than to tell him "yes" and never work.

Christ further explains to the audience that John the Baptist came preaching *the way of righteousness* to all men. Jesus reminded the

audience that the publicans and harlots heard John and repented. The chief priests and elders heard not John, neither repented. Every message you hear may be *your* second chance. John the Baptist is dead, but God still has messengers.