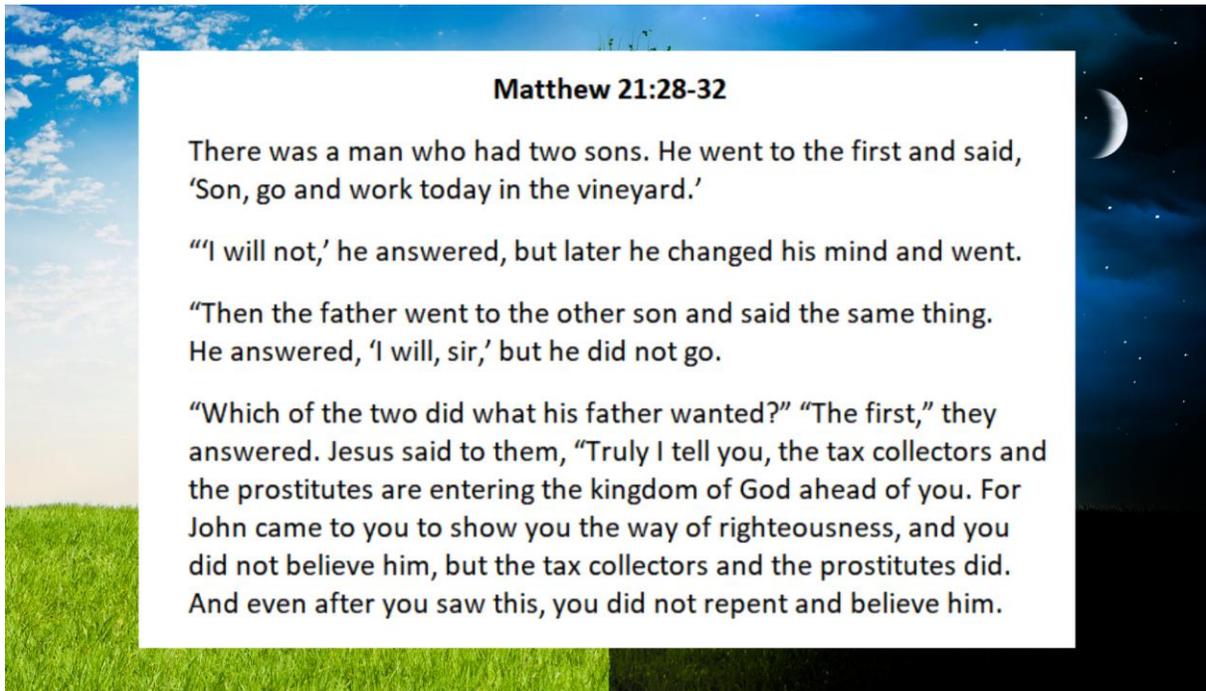


Parable of the Two Sons

by Jason E. Royle / www.jasoneroyle.com



Commonly referred to as the Parable of the Two Sons, this story occurs near the end of the personal ministry of Jesus. In it we discover a powerful lesson on discipleship.

Have you ever been challenged to do something, and actually promised to do it, but your good intentions flew out the window? You probably felt a twinge of guilt, but you were able to rationalize the situation and tell yourself, "Oh well, someone else will do it."

Or, you may have had the opposite reaction. Like the first person mentioned in our story, you may have had a twinge of rebellion in your heart when you were asked to respond and you told the person that you would not do it. Later on, however, your conscience got the best of you and you went out and completed what, at first, you said you didn't want to do. If this has happened to you, then you can relate to the two brothers mentioned in our story today, for both of them, you see, had attitudes which are still very common in our world today.

Simply put, Jesus here in our story today is illustrating the importance of obedience to God. That merely having good intentions, is not enough. That it's not enough to simply mean to do well, to do good, one must actually take action toward doing better. Good intentions must be followed by responsible, conscientious obedience.

The two sons in Jesus' story represented two different groups of people.

The first son, the one who at first, refused his father's request, but then later changed his mind and went, he represented the tax collectors and prostitutes. The tax collectors and prostitutes were obvious sinners - but when the message of God's love was told, they were willing to change their minds and do right.

The second son, who at first said he would go and work, but then did not go, represented the self-righteous people, the pious Pharisees and the sanctimonious Sadducees. When John came ministering, the religious crowd showed great interest in his work, but they would not repent and humble themselves. (Mt. 3:7-12; John 1:19-28). The nonreligious crowd, however, confessed their sins and obeyed John's words and were baptized.

In life, there are those who will agree to do almost anything they are asked to do, but then never fulfill their promises. These people are illustrated by the son who was asked to work in the vineyard and agreed, but later changed his mind.

In life, also, are those who, for whatever reason, don't want to accept responsibility, they fail to see their own role the matter. These people are illustrated by the brother who refused to work in the vineyard, but later repented and went. I guess you could say the two types of people in the world are the "saintly" sinners - and the "sinful" saints.

None of us is perfect in our response to God. This parable reminds us of that... that even though we all fall short... even though none of us are perfect follower's of Christ, we should all do our best at working toward becoming better followers of Christ.

This parable is a powerful lesson on discipleship, but it also emphasizes growth, at least in the life of the son who changed his mind and went. Even though we are not worthy, God has called all of us to become His disciples. He expects us to work in His vineyard. God knows all of our weaknesses and is able to help us overcome them. We have a God of second chances. How many times has God given people second chances?

We can think of Abraham (when he was trying to save Lot's family), Jonah (after he escaped from the fish's belly), and Peter (after his repeated denial of Jesus), and certainly of ALL of humanity who are surrounded by sin. God is truly a God of second chances.

In closing I am reminded of a quote by Oliver Cromwell,
"The person who stops being better," he said, "stops being good."