

THEME: THE PARABLES OF JESUS

TOPIC: THE TWO SONS

TEXT: MATTHEW 21:28-32

INTRODUCTION

As seen in the last two parables, Jesus often responded to questions from His disciples with a parable.

- **"The Unmerciful Servant" (Matthew 18:21-35)**, in reply to a question about forgiveness
- **"The Labourers in the Vineyard" (Matthew 20:1-16)**, in reply to a question about what disciples would receive, who have given up all to follow Jesus.

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 – **Matt. 21:23-27**
- b. In response, He told three parables, namely:
 - **"The Two Sons" – Matthew 21:28-32**
 - **"The Wicked Vinedressers" – Matthew 21:33-46**
 - **"The Wedding Feast" – Matthew 22:1-14**

In this lesson, we shall focus our attention on the parable of **"The Two Sons"**.

I. THE PARABLE AND ITS EXPLANATION

A. THE PARABLE IN 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
 - The first son says he won't go, but later regrets it and goes
 - The second son said he would, but did not actually go

B. JESUS EXPLAINS THE PARABLE.

1. He begins with a question: **"Which 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
 - **"Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you."**
 - **"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
 - They were like the second son, who said he would go, but didn't
 - 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...
 - The tax collectors (and others) who accepted John's baptism **"justified God"**
 - Whereas those religious leaders who were not baptized **"rejected the counsel of God for themselves" – Luke 7:29-30**

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. As Hendriksen says in his commentary: **"That lesson is, of course, this: the doing of the will of God is the one thing that is needful."**
3. Jesus emphasized this truth on other occasions as well:
 - In His Sermon on the Mount - **Matthew 7:21-27**
 - In giving The Great Commission before His ascension to heaven - **Matthew 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 NEEDED TODAY...

1. The doctrines of "cheap grace" and "easy believism" have created a generation of "sayers" and not "doers"
 - Many profess Jesus as Lord, but then don't do what He says – **Luke 6:46**
 - 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"
 - Yet nothing could be further from the truth!
 - Keeping the commandments of God is essential to salvation – **Matthew 7:21-23; 28:20; John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10, 14; 1 Corinthians 7:19; 1 John 2:3-4**
3. What we must remember is this...
 - When we keep God's commandments, we in no way earn or merit salvation
 - We simply do that which is our duty to do, and always remain "unprofitable servants" saved by grace – **Luke 17:10; Titus 3:4-7**
- c. Yet, we still **"should be careful to maintain good works!"** – **Titus 3:1, 8, 14**

IN CONCLUSION

Remember that it was the "religious leaders" in Jesus' day.

- Who **"rejected the counsel of God for themselves"** in not accepting
- John's teaching on the need for repentance and baptism
- Who likely believed that they had good "theological grounds" for not heeding the simple commands of God given through His preachers.

In similar fashion, many "religious leaders" of our day.

- Reject the clear teaching of Christ and His apostles concerning the commands to repent and be baptized – **Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38**
- 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

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...