

Matthew 21:23-32

The Challenge of Discipleship: *Responsible Living*

Focus Question: *What makes you change your mind?*

Word of life

“Which of the two did what his father wanted?” Matthew 21:31 (NRSV)

Read [Matthew 21:23-32](#)

Power and authority are key issues in the context of this week’s reading. Between this week’s lesson and last week’s parable of the laborers in the vineyard, Matthew describes a gathering storm of controversy over Jesus’ authority. Jesus foretells his death and resurrection ([20:17-19](#)), only to have the mother of the disciples James and John ask for her sons to be in a position of authority in Jesus’ kingdom. ([Matthew 20:20-28](#)) Jesus enters in triumph into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and promptly overturns the tables of the money-changers in the temple. ([Matthew 21:1-7](#))

The multitudes are following Jesus; after all, he reaches out to the outcasts and sinners. The religious leaders are threatened and question his authority. They confront Jesus in the temple. Their weapons are barbed questions; Jesus responds with the parable of the two sons. ([Matthew 21:28-32](#))

1. *What word of challenge and judgment is in this parable?*
2. *Count the number of times the word “authority” is used in this passage. What is at stake over the issue of authority?*

Once again, the setting of the parable is the vineyard – the place where the landowner offered free, unmerited grace in the previous parable. ([Matthew 20:1-16](#)) Now the hearer is challenged with the implications of this grace. Such grace leads to changed minds and hearts – repentance. This change is seen in the first son, who at first refuses the invitation and call to work in the vineyard, but later experiences a change of heart and goes to work. He experiences a change of mind that leads to a change of life. In contrast is the second son, who initially says, “Yes,” to his father’s invitation but then fails to respond.

3. *What is the relationship between faith, repentance, and response?*
4. *Imagine a conversation between the mother and father of these two sons. What would it be like?*

Grace leads to a change of heart – to repentance, which is an awesome and sometimes terrifying gift. Repentance forces us to look at ourselves honestly and acknowledge our failings, our times of saying, “yes” and then not doing anything, or our times of saying “no” when we should have said, “yes.”

1. *Give an example in your own life when you said no, but later changed your mind.*
2. *Which person would you rather work beside: the one who says no, but comes through or the one who says yes, but doesn’t show up?*
3. *How can we develop the quality of our “yes” meaning “yes”?*

But repentance is also a grace-filled gift because it leads us back to the grace of God, where we are reminded that we are not ultimately bound by our past actions and by what we have done, but by what God in Christ has done for us. The question becomes, “What do we do with such unbridled grace – grace that both judges and forgives, grace that includes both those inside the religiously acceptable circle as well as those who are seemingly on the outside?” This is the challenge for the Christian disciple.

4. *Why is God’s grace so challenging to receive?*
5. *How is your life different because of God’s grace?*

Prayer

Loving God, receive our repentant spirit and make us new. Amen

Dig Deeper

[Psalm 51:10-17](#)

Last word

This week, ponder your “yes” and “no”.

Do your decisions

consistently serve Christ?