**19th Sunday After Pentecost**

**Sermon**

**Text:**

**Theme:**  What do you think?

 What do you think? What do you think about the pandemic, masks, the political situation, the Covid spread in the Capital, the new restrictions in our State? One cannot escape these things today. They are all around us. It is affecting everyone. So, what do you think? These are hard issues, and the question, “**What do you think?**” There seems to be so much information and much of it in confusing and often contradicting. So, it is hard to answer.

 **What do you think?** Jesus put this question to the crowd listening to him in the Temple, especially the Jewish leaders who were out to get him. Just before this question, the chief priests and the elders had questioned Jesus’ right to teach in the temple. “By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority?” Jesus replied, “I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John’s baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?” They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ But if we say, ‘Of human origin’—we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet.”**27**So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.” Then he said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things. “We don’t’ know” was the coward’s way out.

 Jesus confronted their cowardice. You see, the chief priest and the elders were put on their heals with his earlier question to them about John the Baptist. Jesus was about to show them real authority! Here comes another question. It was Jesus time to teach! He didn't say to them, "Here's an easy question." He actually gave them hard question!" A hard question from a simple story – The Parable of the Two Sons.

 **"What do *you* think?" A man had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go work today in my vineyard.’ 29He answered, ‘I will not,’ but later he changed his mind and went. 30He came to the second and said the same thing. The second son answered, ‘I will go, sir,’ but he did not go. 31Which of the two did the will of his father?”**

 What else *could* they say? They said to him, “**The first.”** The right answer? This is where the story gets interesting. Jesus does not say; “That is correct!” Instead he hits them with something that makes them boil with anger. Jesus wanted them to get the message. **Jesus said to them, “Amen[[1]](#footnote-1) I tell you: The tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. 32For John came to you in the way of righteousness, but you did not believe him. However, the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him. Even when you saw this, you did not change your mind and believe him.”**

 Matthew tells us that these leaders knew Jesus was saying these parables and he was talking about them. And they were angry. **When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them. 46They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.**

 Just in case you didn’t catch what Jesus was saying, let me explain. He compared them and their self-righteous opinions of themselves, to their response to John's call to repentance. He also compared it to their response to him and his teachings. The son who said he would do as the father asked, but then didn't do it—that was them! And the "crooks" and "prostitutes" who, the Bible say, both heard John and Jesus gladly and put into practice what they said is the son who said he wouldn't do as his father asked, but then did.

 That's what John and Jesus both meant by "**repent!"** Go and ***do*** what the Father has said. No matter how religious they were, no matter how political they were, said Jesus, they needed to do more than hear the Father's words; they needed to do something in response -- **Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. 23Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.. James (1:22-24)**

 In Jesus' day it was the so called “sinners” who responded to the call for repentance and not those who saw themselves as righteous. It was the **broken-by-life, broken by sin, broken in spirit,** who responded to the offer of new life, forgiveness! Not those who thought of themselves as having already arrived. And why is that? The “sinners” realized what Jesus was all about. They heard Jesus say it. “Neither do I condemn you!” “Your sins are forgiven.” And in a matter of days, they would see him put those very words into action by going to the cross to suffer and die! He is the Messiah! The Savior! And they responded to his call!

 Again, there is much that could be said here, but I think the real truth lies in the fact that ***gratitude* drives the forgiven to action.**

 GOD takes all sinners, all who are in need and says, "OK, you are changed; you are made whole, now go out into the vineyard and show it. Find another who wants wholeness and release and freedom from the burden of sin and tell them the good news that the most wonderful thing has happened--Jesus is yours! Help lift off their burdens like another lifted yours.

 **So, what *do* you think?** I don't mean them. I mean *you*. Are you ready to go? To work in the vineyard.

 A man applied for a job as a handyman.  His employer asked him a few questions, "So, can you do carpenter work?"

"Um, no."

"Well, how about plumbing?

"Um, no."

"Well, how about electrical work?"

"No, I don't know anything about electrical work"

"Well, what makes you so handy then?

"Well, I live just right around the corner and **I'm available."**

**GOD’S WILL IS DONE NOT BY THE PERFECT BUT BY THE REPENTANT**  !

 I would like to end this sermon with a story. Jesus didn't tell this one. It is about 4 church members. Their names are "Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody."

 According to the story, there was an important job that needed to be done at church. The story doesn't say what job exactly but we could imagine that it could be teaching a class, being on a committee, serving on a board or helping with maintenance. Fist, **Everybody** was asked to help. But Everybody was sure it was **Somebody’s** turn to help so he said no. Somebody got mad because he felt he had done enough already and it should be Everybody’s turn. So, Everybody then thought **Anybody** should be the one to do it because he has never helped before. Anybody said no, he didn’t have the time and said **Nobody** should be the one to do it. In the end, Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody had to do what Anybody could have done."

So, what do you think? Are you available? **GOD’S WILL IS DONE NOT BY THE PERFECT BUT BY THE REPENTANT** !

**Amen**

**Gospel**

**Matthew 21:28–32**

28“What do you think? A man had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go work today in my vineyard.’ 29He answered, ‘I will not,’ but later he changed his mind and went. 30He came to the second and said the same thing. The second son answered, ‘I will go, sir,’ but he did not go. 31Which of the two did the will of his father?”

They said to him, “The first.”

Jesus said to them, “Amen[[2]](#footnote-2) I tell you: The tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. 32For John came to you in the way of righteousness, but you did not believe him. However, the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him. Even when you saw this, you did not change your mind and believe him.”

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)