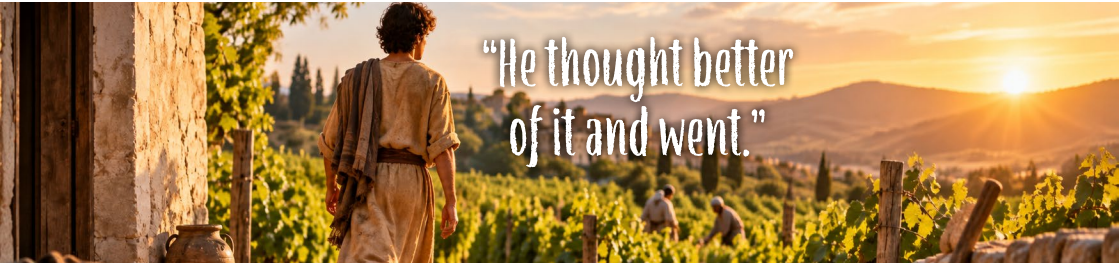


Living the Word

A WEEK'S JOURNEY WITH THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Year A - 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

A companion for encountering Jesus' love in everyday life.



Gospel: Matthew 21:28-32

You are invited to read the Gospel passage slowly, attentively, respectfully and reverently as a gift of God.

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people, 'What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He went and said to the first, "My boy, you go and work in the vineyard today."

He answered, "I will not go," but afterwards thought better of it and went.

The man then went and said the same thing to the second who answered, "Certainly, Sir", but did not go.

Which of the two did the father's will? "The first," they said. Jesus said to them, 'I tell you solemnly, tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you.

For John came to you, a pattern of true righteousness, but you did not believe him, and yet the tax collectors and prostitutes did. Even after seeing that, you refused to think better of it and believe in him.'

Background to Gospel passage

Where does it happen?

Jesus is now in Jerusalem – the final stage of his public ministry.

When does it happen?

Tensions are mounting between Jesus and the Jewish authorities who are opposed to what he stands for.

Who is there?

The "chief priests and elders" were influential groups within the Jewish religious and political leadership in Jerusalem, especially around the Temple worship.

What happens?

The passage has two sections. The first is the parable of the two sons, in which Jesus holds up a mirror to his listeners and invites them to recognise themselves and their need for growth. The first son initially refuses to obey but later changes his mind and goes to work, while the second son says "yes" but fails to follow through.

The second section is a direct challenge to Jesus' religious hearers. They are like the second son: outwardly obedient and respectful of God

and the Torah, yet unwilling to change their attitudes and way of life. By contrast, those regarded as the “rejects of religion”—tax

collectors and prostitutes—are more open to the message of John and Jesus and more willing to change.

Recognising Stage (Meditate)

- *Trust the Holy Spirit at work within you.*
- *Enter the Gospel: When have I experienced something similar? What does it remind me of?*
- *Let the Gospel and your memories speak to each other.*
- *Notice where you encounter Jesus’ loving presence today.*
- *If needed, use the following prompts to awaken memories.*

“Which of the two did the father’s will?”

Can you remember a time when your first response to a call to change attitudes or behaviour was a rebellious “No, I will not!”, but later, after calming down and reflecting, you changed your mind and did what you knew was right?

Or perhaps a time when you said “Yes” outwardly, but your response was superficial or insincere, and you failed to follow through.

“Tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you.”

Can you remember a humbling experience of recognising the goodness and faith of people you had once looked down on or judged as inferior—outsiders, people of other religions, atheists, secularists, delinquents, or even those who had previously let you down?

Or can you recall a major or minor conversion experience in your own life, family, group or community—a moment when you were challenged to a change of heart, a new way of seeing and doing things? Perhaps it was painful at the time, but ultimately became a necessary step towards freedom, growth and maturity.

What memories come back to you? Listen deeply to your own life experience.

Where was it? When was it? Who was there? What happened?

(Some might find it helpful to journal their memory.)

I remember the time when...

Gen.25:16, ‘Truly God was in this place and I didn’t see it,’ until now!

Prayer Response

You are invited to respond in your own words, and where possible, together with some words from the passage. Let the prayer flow from your recognition of the passage, or any part of it, in life experience. You might find it helpful to journal your prayer.

Tell your Father how this passage and the memories it has evoked have awakened gratitude for the presence of Jesus in your life and in the world. Heavenly Father, I thank you...

The Gospel is always a call to repentance as well. Share with the Father your sorrow for the times when you, or a community you belong to, have fallen short in living this Gospel. Heavenly Father, I am sorry for...

Ask your Father for the help you need to live the Gospel more fully—in yourself, your family, community, Church and world. Heavenly Father, please give us the help we need to...



You are invited to deepen this prayer experience by **resting your heart silently in God's presence and love. The quiet repetition of a word or phrase from the passage may help you on this journey to greater stillness and greater silence, e.g. 'Work in the vineyard.'**

An Invitation to Reflect

From your journey with the passage in meditation and prayer, what new insight or understanding have you received about the true meaning of love or some expression of it, into what it means to be fully human, and how God's kingdom is being made present among us today?

Rest in this truth, hold it in prayer and trust that it will bear fruit in your life.

Thought for the week

Every human heart harbours the potential for change and growth.

Reaction

With God's help I will try to live this Gospel by...

Children

For Primary School Children

Reading: Jesus gives a strong message about 'empty words and promises' that are not backed up by actions.

Recognising: Can you remember a time when you were stubborn and initially refused to do what you were asked? But later you thought better of it and obeyed?

Draw or write about how Jesus helps you to change your heart and do what is right?



Responding: We thank you Father for those who have taught us that actions are more important than words.

We ask forgiveness for the times that we failed to acknowledge that we were in the wrong.

We pray heavenly father that we will always be open learn, to grow and to change when we need to.

Resting: "My child."

Reflecting: Promises don't count for much unless we are ready to keep them.

Reaction: This week I will try to show love by..