

## MATTHEW 21:28-32

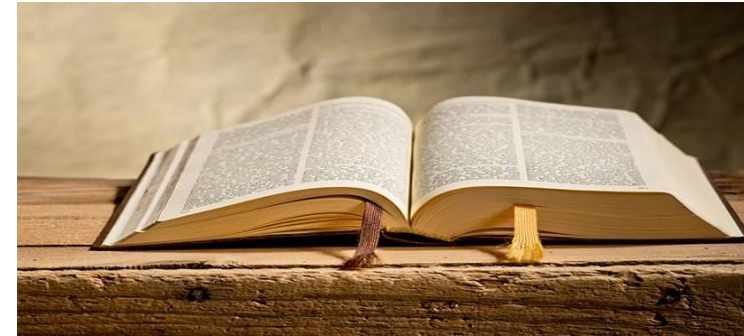
Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people, ‘What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He went and said to the first, “My boy, you go and work in the vineyard today.” He answered, “I will not go,” but afterwards thought better of it and went. The man then went and said the same thing to 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.’

**COMMENTARY:** We could say this reading describes the human condition. The two sons struggle to serve. We all would love to be seen as a model for humanity but we know the reality. Who doesn’t have feet of clay? So there are those who struggle to serve, then those who want to but get overtaken by another passion. Finally there are those who simply don’t intend to grow yet believe they are a model for us all! – the chief priests and the elders!!

# Liturgy of The Word

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

1 October, 2023



**Remember your mercies, O Lord.**

Lord, make me know your ways.

Lord, teach me your paths.

Make me walk in your truth, and teach me:  
for you are God my saviour.

Remember your mercy, Lord,  
and the love you have shown from of old.  
Do not remember the sins of my youth.

In your love remember me,  
because of your goodness, O Lord.

The Lord is good and upright.  
He shows the path to those who stray,  
He guides the humble in the right path,  
He teaches his way to the poor.

## **EZEKIEL 18:25-28**

When the sinner renounces sin, he shall certainly live

The word of the Lord was addressed to me as follows: ‘You object, “What the Lord does is unjust.” Listen, you House of Israel: is what I do unjust? Is it not what you do that is unjust? When the upright man renounces his integrity to commit sin and dies because of this, he dies because of the evil that he himself has committed. When the sinner renounces sin to become law-abiding and honest, he deserves to live. He has chosen to renounce all his previous sins; he shall certainly live; he shall not die.’

**COMMENTARY:** Just as we all ask ourselves whether God exists or not, I think we all ask ourselves what is sin. Feeling guilt may or may not accompany sin. Guilt can be the result of conditioning in childhood. Then it may be a warning that something is wrong. If guilt is missing in my behaviour this doesn’t mean my actions are moral or healthy.

By acknowledging I am a sinner simply means I am aware that a part of me is not yet surrendered to God, and when I pray ‘Lord have mercy’ I am asking God to let me so know his love I will be motivated to live my life in a more human way.

What sin does is destroy the soul and therefore my humanity. The dying spoken of in the above reading relates to this destruction. This dying is very different to that described in today’s second reading.

## **PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11**

If our life in Christ means anything to you, if love can persuade at all, or the Spirit that we have in common, or any tenderness and sympathy, then be united in your convictions and united in your love, with a common purpose and a common mind. That is the one thing which would make me completely happy. There must be no competition among you, no conceit; but everybody is to be self-effacing. Always consider the other person to be better than yourself, so that nobody thinks of his own interests first but everybody thinks of other people’s interests instead. In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus:

*His state was divine,  
yet he did not cling to his equality with God  
but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave,  
and became as humanity is;  
and being as all people are, he was humbler yet,  
even to accepting death, death on a cross.  
But God raised him high  
and gave him the name which is above all other names  
so that all beings in the heavens,  
on earth and in the underworld,  
should bend the knee at the name of Jesus  
and that every tongue should acclaim  
Jesus Christ as Lord, in the glory of God the Father.*

**COMMENTARY:** The words in italics are what is known as the Philippian hymn. We could do no better than learn this by heart and recite it each day as a prayer. The whole process of the Incarnation is laid out for us:

**Divinity – humanity – death – resurrection.**

The first three stages involve a letting go of self. A death. But in the first reading the letting go is missing. Jesus is the opposite of sin.