

Changing Your Mind

Parables of Jesus: Part 13 “Changing Your Mind”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – November 14, 2021

25th Sunday After Pentecost

Readings: Matthew 21:28-32

Reflection: Psalm 111

Greeting: Lord, your word has been tried and tested. How we love your word and remember your precepts. Your instruction is true! Your commandments are our joy! Help me understand so I can live! Praise the Lord! (*Psalm 119*)

Prayer: Almighty God, the author of our lives. We yearn to hear the word that you have for us today. Help us to lift up our ears that we may hear you. Open our eyes that we may see you. Rest upon our hearts that we may experience your love more deeply so that we may share that love with the world. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 111

Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation. Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them. Full of honor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever. He has gained renown by his wonderful deeds; the LORD is gracious and merciful. He provides food for those who fear him; he is ever mindful of his covenant. He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the heritage of the nations. The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy. They are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness. He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever. (Psalm 111 NRSV)*

We read the words of Psalm 11 and hear of Trusting in God. That following God will lead us to understanding and wisdom. How do you listen to God? Do you trust that God will lead you to where you need to be? How can we share Christ’s love with others? How can we learn to change our minds? How can we share in the hope of Christ’s redeeming grace?

Prayer: O God, teach us to listen more closely. Guide us in understanding your ways so that we may grow together in wisdom. Help us to follow you where you need us to be. Help us to rest in our risen Savior. Hear our prayers on this day, raised up in Jesus’ name, and show mercy to your children. May your Spirit guide us to peace and light everlasting. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture reading for today comes from the Common English Bible. Our reading for today comes from Matthew chapter 21 verses 28 through 32.

“What do you think? A man had two sons. Now he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ ‘‘No, I don’t want to,’ he replied. But later he changed his mind and went. ‘The father said the same thing to the other son, who replied, ‘Yes, sir.’ But he didn’t go. ‘Which one of these two did his father’s will?’ They said, ‘The first one.’ Jesus said to them, ‘I assure you that tax collectors and prostitutes are entering God’s kingdom ahead of you. For John came to you on the righteous road, and you didn’t believe him. But tax collectors and prostitutes believed him. Yet even after you saw this, you didn’t change your hearts and lives and you didn’t believe him. (Matthew 21:28-32 CEB+)

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

For Our parable for this week is all about being willing to change. In it, we have two sons. The father goes to the first and says, “go and work in the vineyard today.” The son says, “no I don't want to.” But later he changes his mind, and he decides to go. When he says the same thing to the other, the son says, “Yes, I'll go” but he doesn't. And the question that Jesus asks is “which one has done his father's will?” Now, at first glance, this may seem like an easy question. The one who actually went to work did his father’s will. But the deeper understanding of this parable is all about being willing to change. And we see this when Jesus addresses the crowd. The authority of Jesus has been called into question by the Pharisees and the religious experts. So, Jesus points out that John the Baptist came and called people to change their lives and turn to God. And who responded? Those who initially had turned away, the tax collectors and the prostitutes, and he is pointing out that they're the ones who listened. They're the ones who were willing to change their minds and do what was right. Whereas those who thought they were already doing the right thing saw John and said, “That's not for me. I'm already doing God's will.” But in doing so, they deny that anything needs to change. They deny that they are doing anything wrong. That they have nothing to turn away from. That they have no reason to change their minds.

And that gets to the deepest level of understanding for me of this parable. Because we could take the surface meaning and think it was just to correct them, and now we're done. But it speaks to something deeper for me. Jesus poses the question “You saw people's lives being changed so why didn't you think you could change?” And the reason that this strikes me is because it speaks both to the idea of turning to follow God and the idea of hearing something, taking it in, and changing because of it. And it speaks to me about many of the great difficulties that we see in the church today. We see it in many ways. We see it in the conflict and the strife that we have within the church itself over many different issues. And interestingly, it often

comes down to “this is what we've always done, and I see no reason to change.” And the interesting thing here is that's the view of the religious experts in Christ's day. “Surely I'm doing everything already, and I never have to think about it again, because I know what I'm doing.” And we see this in many issues. We see it in the debate between people who think that you either believe science or believe the Bible. The view is sometimes that if the Bible and science appear to disagree, then science must be ignored. The position is that we know what the Bible says so we have no reason to change our minds. To me, this is a false problem all together. Do I have to not believe the Bible if I accept science? No, because I can change how I understand Scripture. Because at the heart, that was the message that Jesus brought. Not to forget all of the scriptures, but to see your relationship with God in a new way. And it struck me, because so often we get so tied up in the views that we have, that we become unwilling to ever think that we need to change our minds. And in some ways, it means that we deny Christ the ability to change us. We deny the ability of the Holy Spirit to guide us. We deny God's ability to show us new things. And that's a problem. It's a problem because the world is not a static place. We are not static creatures. We are people who live and think and grow, and we are often called to change.

Now, one of the reasons I started thinking about this on this level is that when I think about my relationship with Christ, I think about it as Christ always showing me something new. I don't sit down and read the Bible, always expecting to find the same thing. If I did, I would never have to read it again because I could memorize it, have it down and say “yep, I know what's there. And now I know for certain exactly who and what God is and exactly what God wants and exactly how to get there.” I could put the Bible down and never read it again, and that doesn't work for me. And the reason is that as my life brings new experiences, I read God's word in a new way. When events in life make us think about what's going on, we turn to God and say, “God, what's going on?” But we have to be willing to accept that the answer might be “I need you to see things in a new way. I need you to listen.” And the struggle that I find is that often we want to listen, but we mainly want to listen so that we can have our views confirmed, not to have them challenged. We want our beliefs to be upheld at every turn so that we never have to change.

One of the most important things that I have discovered in life is that life is a constant series of changes. To give you an example, I do not treat my children the same way that I did when they were born. No longer do I hold them, feed them, and clothe them, thinking they can do none of it themselves. Because they've changed. No matter how much I may want them to be those soft little babies again, I love who they are today. That they dress themselves. That they feed themselves. That I know there's many things that I do for them now that someday they will not need me to do. And it will change once again. So is life. But what if we think about our relationship with our Heavenly Father in the same way? That when we're spiritually young, God says one thing to us because that's what we need God to be for us in that moment. And God knows what we need. But is that always going to remain the same? That God who once

held us in his arms and put us in our diapers of faith will someday have lessons for us that we weren't ready for before. When we learn to walk, things change. We learned to run, we learned to jump. We gain understanding, and we gain wisdom, and we gain experience, and we see new things and we're ready for new things. I read the Bible in much the same way. I may have read a story in my youth and understood it in one way. And I read a story as an adult in a completely different way. Because we're no longer the children of Sunday school, coloring a picture of Noah's Ark. We gain a deeper understanding as we grow and sometimes it requires us to change how we see things.

Because the problem is, if we can't change then we become stuck, because we no longer see a need to do anything different. And that's what Jesus is pointing out in these parables. Jesus saying "I'm teaching you this new thing. God is pointing you in this new direction. And yet you want to cling to what you think you already know. Look, these people who you think aren't doing the right thing at all, they figured out how to change their minds so that they could change their lives. Why can't you?" I take that to heart always when I turn to Scripture. I don't turn to it so that it affirms the views I already have. I turn to it so that it may teach me. I turn to Christ so that he can instruct me in the new thing that I need to know today. We must be a people willing to change because change is not viewed as a bad thing in the Bible. Change is seen as a way of gaining wisdom becoming stronger in our faith. Even God is portrayed as being willing to change! Abraham and God discuss how many good people would save Sodom and Gomorrah. Moses is seen as getting God to turn from destroying the Israelites in the wilderness. Change is seen as a positive thing. Change keeps us from rejecting everything that we see that doesn't conform to the ideas we already have.

And it doesn't mean we reject scripture simply because new things come to light. It means we see it with new eyes. We hear it with new ears. We experience where we are because God meets us where we are in our lives in our day and in our time. It's a matter of trusting that God will get us to where we need to be. That God will let us know what it is we need to know, because we trust that Christ will always take us where we should be. Not just where we want to be. But to get there we have to be willing to change our minds. So, this is the thought I leave you with today. How is God speaking to you? And are you listening? When you pick up the Bible and you open it up and you read, are you read expecting to find the same old same old or are you picking it up expecting to find the Living Word vibrant and new? Do we allow the Bible to speak to us where we are, or are we constantly trying to contain the Bible where we want it to stay? Are we allowing Christ to speak to us about the here and now? Do we allow Christ to act in our lives? Because it all comes down to the same question. Are you willing to change your mind? Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: God of grace and glory, we thank you that you judge us not by the perfection of our actions, but by our readiness to live boldly by faith. Help us, as individuals and as a congregation, to trust you and follow where you lead, that in Christ your name may be glorified in all the earth. May we find forgiveness in your love. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Current Series – *Parables of Jesus*

Our series is *Parables of Jesus* and will be looking at different parables that Jesus told. Each week I will ask that you read and reflect on the parable coming up. Feel free to discuss it with others or to get together to read and study. I would love to hear your reflections after the Sunday message!

November 21st – *Evil Within* – Mark 7:14-23

Our final lesson is about what comes from within us and our need to take care.

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Patti Corder and the Greenup Ambulance Crew		Angie Veach	Eric Veach
Cathy Devall	Brock McMorris	Ed & Verna Titus	Henry Catey
Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney	Nancy Hoke	Don Wells
Tricia Adkins	Don Stewart	Ronnie Winstead	Annie McMorris
Dwight Parsons	Lauren Stewart	Phyllis Gable	Sage Martin
Dalton McFarland	Darrell Quick	Ruth Ann Finley	Sandy Starwalt
Jodie Bunch	Andie, Ed, Alex, & Katie Kulach	Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks
Wayne Carrell	Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Leo Smith	Bonnie Hite
Lavada Markwell	Greg Williams	Eloise Buffenmeyer	Martha Roberts
Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte	Gene Laymon	Tom Finley
Family of Martha Hurst	Family of Jeanette Carrell	Family of Mike Niebrugge	
Family of Lowell Cutright		Family of Lavada Markwell	

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