

## Matthew 21:23-32

### Gospel Reflection

In the first half of today's Gospel, the Chief priests are referring to the cleansing of the temple as well as Jesus' entire ministry. They consider Jesus' ministry a threat to themselves and the other religious authorities of the day. The question itself was a trap. Jesus' response was, in no way an evasion. He is, essentially, questioning their ability as religious leaders to discern what was from God and what was not. Whoever had received John the Baptist and John's testimony concerning Jesus would receive further enlightenment, that Jesus was the Son of God and the fulfillment of the Law. John the Baptist's ministry was of such public importance that men in their position should have been able to give a final verdict. When the Chief Priests pleaded ignorance on a matter so important, they abdicated from their office as teachers of the nation and had no right to further question the authority of Jesus. Today's lesson for us is that our ability to receive a new revelation or insight is dependent upon our response to a previous revelation.

When the first son heard his father's call, he bluntly said I will not obey. Later he repented and obeyed his father's command in a committed life. The meaning of the first part of this parable is found by reading ahead to Matthew 21:31. During the days of John the Baptist, many attended his meetings who had previously rejected God's rule over their lives. When these men and women listened to John the Baptist, they repented and believed him. They also believed in Jesus. These who had repented entered first into the kingdom of God.

In contrast, the priests, scribes and Pharisees, who should have been good examples, did not repent and believe John and therefore Jesus himself. These men, like the second son, said "we are Abraham's seed", "we are people of God", and "we serve God." They said, "I go" but they didn't budge one inch. This parable calls to attention many of the self righteous people today who call themselves Christians, but who in deed and truth refuse to obey God. They refuse to make time in their daily lives to discern God's will in the Bible and act upon it in obedience to God. Just like the first son, the people who repented and followed Jesus will enter the Kingdom first.

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