



## Lectionary Bible Study Our Savior Lutheran Church

### Lectionary 26

#### Readings Readings and Psalm

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32; Psalm 25:1-9  
Philippians 2:1-13; Matthew 21:23-32

[Click here](#) to join Pastor Mark for a Live Zoom conversation each Wednesday at 10am.

Meeting ID: 868 8793 0554

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#### **Matthew 21:23-32 (NRSV)**

<sup>23</sup> When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" <sup>24</sup> Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. <sup>25</sup> Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' <sup>26</sup> But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet." <sup>27</sup> So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

<sup>28</sup> "What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' <sup>29</sup> He answered, 'I will not'; but later he changed his mind and went. <sup>30</sup> The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir'; but he did not go. <sup>31</sup> Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. <sup>32</sup> For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.

#### **Matthew 21:23-32 (The Message)**

<sup>23</sup> Then he was back in the Temple, teaching. The high priests and leaders of the people came up and demanded, "Show us your credentials. Who authorized you to teach here?"

<sup>24</sup> Jesus responded, "First let me ask you a question. You answer my question and I'll answer yours. <sup>25</sup> About the baptism of John—who authorized it: heaven or humans?"

They were on the spot and knew it. They pulled back into a huddle and whispered, "If we say 'heaven,' he'll ask us why we didn't believe him; <sup>26</sup> if we say 'humans,' we're up against it with the people because they all hold John up as a prophet." <sup>27</sup> They decided to concede that round to Jesus. "We don't know," they answered.

Jesus said, "Then neither will I answer your question.

<sup>28</sup> "Tell me what you think of this story: A man had two sons. He went up to the first and said,

*'Son, go out for the day and work in the vineyard.'*

<sup>29</sup> *"The son answered, 'I don't want to.' Later on he thought better of it and went.*

<sup>30</sup> *"The father gave the same command to the second son. He answered, 'Sure, glad to.' But he never went.*

<sup>31</sup> *"Which of the two sons did what the father asked?"*

*They said, "The first."*

*Jesus said, "Yes, and I tell you that crooks and whores are going to precede you into God's kingdom. <sup>32</sup> John came to you showing you the right road. You turned up your noses at him, but the crooks and whores believed him. Even when you saw their changed lives, you didn't care enough to change and believe him.*

Since last week's parable of the laborers in the vineyard, Jesus has foretolded his death and resurrection (20:17-19) only to have the mother of the disciples James and John ask for her sons to be in a position of authority in Jesus' kingdom (20:20-28). Jesus then heals two blind men (20:29-34) before his triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, after which he promptly overturns the tables of the money-changers in the temple (21:1-7). Is it any wonder that the religious authorities in Jerusalem question Jesus' authority?

- 1. Is it a good thing to question authority?*
- 2. Where does Jesus' authority come from? And what has borne witness to Jesus' authority at this point in Matthew's gospel?*
- 3. Why do you think Jesus first responds to the question of the chief priests and elders by asking them a question in return?*

Obviously, the chief priest and elders are threatened by Jesus (as they were John the baptizer before him). Having turned their trapping question back on them, Jesus next gives them a parable to ponder. The parable of the two sons who are called by their father to work in the vineyard challenges all to think through how we respond to authority. One son responds negatively, but then reacts positively. The other son responds positively, but reacts without action.

- 4. Which son do you relate to most? Is one son a better example the other? Is either son a perfect example?*
- 5. What is the relationship between faith, repentance, and response?*

The first son seems to experience the grace to turn back from his first word and offer the "yes" of faith. The second son knows the right words to say but fails to put the words into practice. The tax collectors and the prostitutes (with whom Jesus associates) seem at first glance to say "no" to God; but their hearts are open to God's message and messenger. The contrast to the chief priests and elders is clear: they appear to be obedient – to say "yes" to God, but they have failed to be open to God's life-changing grace.

- 6. Instead of focusing on the two sons in the parable, how does moving our focus to Jesus as the Son of God bring us a word of grace, a word that might inspire and strengthen our own faith, repentance, and response?*