



Blessed Sacrament Parish
Homily by Father Chris Commerford
October 1, 2017 Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading I Ezekiel 18:25-28

Psalm 25:4-9

Reading II Philippians 2:1-11

Gospel Matthew

Homily

When I ask the children a question, I never know what kind of a reaction I am going to get. With the question today I was surprised that the hands shot up very fast. Some said they didn't always clean their room when they said they were going to, the others put their heads down and were looking around. Others raised their hands real slow. It is a challenge to make our words and actions the same and that is what Jesus was telling us in this story. So often we say we believe in Jesus. "I believe in him. That's easy." The challenge is to live it and to prove it by our lives. Sometimes we have the attitude, "I know Jesus. I'm a Catholic. I know him."

It is interesting because some people I know who are real involved say, "Yeah. I'm Catholic. I went to Catholic school." And that was for people 30 or 40 years ago. And they haven't been involved with the church since, but they are Catholic. The challenge is not just to say we believe, but to live our life as a disciple, a follower of Jesus Christ. And following means moving, going forward and going down the direction God has planned for us.

The first son in the story reluctantly did what he was supposed to do. But at least he did it. He said "no" at first but then changed his mind and did the work he was supposed to do. The good news is that God loves us so much that we get more than one chance to get it right. We have the opportunity to turn back to him, even if we haven't been living as we should, and even if we have fallen into sin — we can repent and come to follow God the way that we need to.

We see that is the case. A lot of the chief priests and the Pharisees were Jewish and they were the leaders and believed they were the chosen ones. They had their ticket punched and some people thought, "Well, there is no hope for them." But they missed the point, they missed the call that John the Baptist gave for repentance. And Jesus said, "You know, sinners change their hearts, they change. But you missed it." That's something we have to be careful of. Hopefully we won't miss the call to turn back to God and to realize the times we haven't followed him. It is easy to become a little bit prideful in this. But the message we heard today is about humility. And when we can

admit when we have fallen short, or been wrong, or haven't been as good as the image we have laid out to other people — then that is good, and that is the challenge we have.

We are called to do the same thing that Jesus did. I love how St. Paul told us today, “Your attitude must be the attitude of Christ.” What is that? Though he was in the form of God he did not deem the equality of God something to be grasped. He didn't build himself up to say, “Yes. I'm equal to God.” What did he do? He emptied himself taking on humanity and living in the form of a slave. He even accepted death on the cross. It was in that act that he was exalted by the cross.

And that is the challenge for us. It is not our mission to build ourselves up, or be raised up like God. We need to realize that we need to rely on him. It is not easy. It is so easy for us to think we know what is best, or we know more than the government, we know more than the church, we know more than our doctor. We know more than everybody else. And because of that we are often like Ezekiel today, “It's not fair.” And we say to God. “God, it's not fair that things happened this way.”

And God says to Ezekiel, “Oh, really. Is it my ways that our not fair, or maybe it is your ways that are not fair. May be you have not lived the way that I told you to but yet you expect everything to fall into place.” It takes humility to say that, doesn't it. Maybe we didn't have it all figured out. Maybe we do need God a little bit more than we think, or what we have shown. So hopefully this is a good way for us to reflect. And hopefully our desire is not just to say we are followers of Jesus, but also to show that we are followers of Jesus Christ and are truly his disciples and that we can have the same attitude that Christ has.

It is hard to have that sense. It is hard at times to be patient and understanding when we feel like we have been wronged, and when we feel like somebody else has gotten more of the glory than we should have gotten, and yet, have that uncomfortable fact that we are children of God. It is important that we are just comfortable with the fact of who we are. It doesn't mean building ourselves up, but is also doesn't mean tearing ourselves down and thinking we are worthless. That is not humility either. “Oh, woe is me.” That's not humility. It is a challenge because we are not accepting the place God has put us in, and the mission he has for us. It is a challenge.

Hopefully we are going to be more like the first son. Maybe we didn't always get it right. Maybe we reluctantly are following the word of God, but we are going to follow it through, we are going to be his disciples — we are not just going to say it. Let's pray to put this into practice. Let's pray to be the disciples of Jesus, even when it is hard, especially when it is hard. Let's pray to open our hearts to him because it is then that we can have that sense of who we are, and that sense of who we are called to be. Let's ask Jesus for the strength to live this out this week.

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