

Matthew 21: Two Parables for the Religious Rulers

We left off last week with Jesus destroying the authority of the religious rulers by asserting Himself as the one operating under God's authority. Remember how I mentioned that the pace of things in Matthew's Gospel was increasing. Perhaps it was in these moments where Jesus proved to them all their faults that truly drove them to eventually do what they did. Knowing what was coming, Jesus also ramped up the person on these leaders. Why do you think that was? Perhaps to give them one more chance to get it right.

Vss. 28-32

This is the first of a series of parables Jesus used to denounce once and for all the supposed authority of the religious rulers. Jesus likens them to the second son who said they would go and work but did nothing. He then lets them know that even tax collectors and prostitutes stand better in the eyes of God than they do. These leaders took this as a tremendous insult. As I read this, I can see their blood pressures boiling and their faces turning beet red. BTW, this is the seventh use of the "righteousness" found in Matthew's recording of Jesus' teachings. This parable aligns well with this morning's message about where our "righteousness" should come from. Many people belong to a church and believe they are Christian because of that membership, but they are not. People can do good, work hard, follow all the rules, and uphold the doctrines and practices, but without the transformation of the heart through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, they are not true believers. Just as this parable serves as a final warning to these leaders, it stands as a warning for those who may be playing the, "I'll fake it till I make it" game. **Read 2 Corinthians 5:17.** The tax collectors and prostitutes may have arrived late, but at least they recognized their sin, repented, and were forgiven. These leaders did not like being told they weren't getting in, but the tax collectors and prostitutes were.

Vss. 33-46

Before they can leave in their anger, Jesus gives them another parable. This is Jesus' most pointed parable so far. It challenges them to decide about God's Son. In other words, what were they going to do with the heir? This parable is a great picture of what a person must go through when faced with this same decision. What are you going to do with Jesus? Perhaps these men were startled at the fact Jesus knew exactly what was truly in their hearts. Then, to carry things further, Jesus takes them to the OT to give an analogy about Him being the "stone".

Jesus uses what we label as a Messianic Psalm to draw this analogy. **Read Psalm 118:22-23.** Jesus uses this reference to show that the son thrown out of the vineyard and killed is also the “cornerstone” in God’s redemptive plan. And of course, we know that Jesus is the true cornerstone of our faith.

Take note of how Jesus changed form speaking about the Kingdom of Heaven to speaking here about the Kingdom of God. Since the work of the cross was going to include the Gentiles along with the Jews, perhaps Jesus was pointing this out to them to let them know that it is the Father who chooses the righteous and not them? Who is this nation that the Kingdom of God was going to be given to? **Read 1 Peter 2:9.** The church is the “holy nation” Jesus refers to. Who is the rock on which the church is built? Jesus of course. **Read 1 Corinthians 3:11.**