

REPENTANCE IS A CHANGE OF MIND AND HEART

The mind that realizes the seriousness of his sin -- The heart that seeks to please the Heavenly Father.

Matthew 21:28-32

TEXT: *"What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.' 'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. 'Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go. 'Which of the two did what his father wanted?' 'The first,' they answered. Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

If you were about to die, what would be your "last words?" If you had the chance to leave behind your last counsel and advice, what would it be? What would you say to your "good children?" What would you say to your naughty children?

Those of you who read the Bible regularly may have been shocked at what Israel said to his 12 sons on his death bed. He called them in and brought up all their past sins. Read it in Genesis 49. They came before their father for his blessing, but instead he brought up their most embarrassing sins. But when he came to his son, Judah, his fourth son who had committed adultery with his daughter-in-law who had disguised herself as a temple prostitute of one of the Canaanite goddesses, Jacob (or, Israel) declared: ***Judah, your brothers will praise you...*** How can this be?? Jacob had already recalled the horrible sins of his first three sons, Reuben, Simeon and Levi. What about Judah?? Was his sin any less serious than theirs? No. But Israel went on: ***The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.*** Ge 49 There's more to discuss about this, but simply put, the Savior of the world will come from Judah. The Savior of not only Judah's sins, but also Reuben's, Simeon's, Levi's, Israel's, Abraham's, yours and mine.

Jesus didn't have much time for "last words." It was Monday of Holy Week and by Thursday night He would be arrested, crucified the next day and buried. For all intents and purposes, His personal ministry will have come to an end. No longer would His gracious warnings be heard by those who needed to hear them and repent. The people to whom most of His words recorded for us in these chapters of Matthew were considered the most religious people in the world. But they did not listen. With great sadness in his heart Jesus warns them with a parable they needed to hear and believe: ***There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.' 'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. 'Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go. 'Which of the two did what his father wanted?' 'The first,' they answered. Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.*** Repent or go to hell! For us who are gathered together this morning, who hear His Word and believe it, this is a good opportunity to examine what this means: REPENTANCE IS A CHANGE OF MIND AND HEART. The mind that recognizes the seriousness of sin; and, The heart that seeks to please the Heavenly Father.

The people to whom Jesus give this warning held high regard to the now-beheaded prophet, John the Baptist. But if you would look at how Jesus seems to describe John's congregation we wonder what it was that John was preaching: ***Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did.*** As Jesus pointed this out to these religious leaders He was urging them to consider how serious was THEIR OWN SIN before God and that their high opinion of themselves was keeping them from the repentance that is necessary for salvation.

This tragic error disregards the cross on which Jesus would be crucified. Paul writes: ***There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*** Ro 3 Prostitute or Pope: it makes no difference. The soul that sins will die! Roman Catholic or Baptist or WELS Lutheran, the soul that sins will die! You and I are going to die

because we all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God.

Then: ***God presented (Jesus) as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished-*** Don't think that sin isn't serious just because lightning doesn't strike us when we gossip, curse, covet or lust. God put up with sin for a long time before he sent the Flood in Noah's day. He put up with sin for a long time before God did something about it. But then came the presentation of God's wrath: ***God presented (Jesus) as a sacrifice of atonement... (God) did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.*** Ro 3 Only when my mind understands that Jesus Christ DIED FOR ME and because of MY SIN, am I standing on that first part of repentance that is portrayed in Jesus' parable of those two boys.

Surely the first son was a sinner of the boldest type. The father said: ***'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.'*** ***''I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.*** True repentance is a mind that recognizes the seriousness of its sin while at the same time possessing a heart that is changed so that it now seeks to please the Heavenly Father.

The Pharisees and the elders of the people knew that Jesus was talking about them. They knew that He had established His claim that He was the Christ of God but they were determined to kill Jesus and by Friday they would have their wish. Jesus' words only made them hate him all the more: ***For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.*** Really? Prostitutes in heaven? Homosexuals in heaven? No. The Bible does not say that sexual perverts will be in heaven. What the Bible teaches is that when a sinner repents, he is no longer a sinner, but a saint! The homosexual and prostitute is no longer a homosexual or a prostitute, or an alcoholic, or a gambler, but a saint. And this faith that saves produces a change in the heart of a sinner so that we turn from our sins and live according to our Father's will. Just as the parable teaches: ***''I will not,' (the first son) answered, but later he changed his mind and went.*** A change of heart produces another change of mind.

That change of mind, first crushed by the Holy Spirit and God's Law, is then renewed by the promise of God's grace through Jesus, and then is a mind determined to do the right thing in God's eyes. Note how masterful Jesus was in demonstrating this in his parable! The one son repented and did his father's will. The other son flipped his father off with a hypocritical lying promise, and disobeyed his father. Jesus asked them: ***''Which of the two did what his father wanted?''*** ***''The first,' they answered.*** The people knew, do you?

Of course, you do. That's why the Lord's Supper is so important to you. Having confessed our sins before our Lord who died for us, we are assured that he is still with us with his true body and blood to assure us that he is ever present with his grace and mercy. This is no trifle! This is the greatest gift on earth, for the body and blood of Jesus that was given and shed on the cross 2000 years ago now comes to you so intimately that you are united with Jesus as he is united with you. Paul calls it a "communion," or a "participation": ***Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.*** 1 Co 10. Which son are you? Paul also writes concerning the Lord's Supper: ... whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 1 Co 11 Again, which son are you?

May your public confession of sin and your public proclamation of faith in Jesus' death and forgiveness strengthen and keep you in this blessed state of repentance until the coming of our Lord Jesus! Amen