

THE PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS

Week #3 of a 4-Week Series, "Parables of the Bible"

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Early one morning, a mother was trying to wake up her son and said, "Son, wake up! Wake up! It's time to go to school."

And the son said, "But I don't want to go to school."

And she said, "Well, give me two reasons why you don't want to go to school."

And the son said, "Well, the first one is all the kids hate me. And the second one is all the teachers hate me."

And the mom said, "Well, that's no reason not to go. Come on; get ready!"

And he said, "Why don't you give me two reasons why I should go."

And she said, "Well, for one, you're 50 years old." [Congregants laugh] "And for another, you're the principal." [Congregants laugh]

So how many people ever had something important to do that you said "Yes" to -- whether yes to someone or yes to yourself -- like maybe having a conversation where you had to work out a difficult issue; or whether it was working towards a goal; or whether it was about doing something that was valuable and important, like waking up and going and getting some exercise like your doctor told you -- but then did not turn around and do it? Anybody ever say "Yes" to something and then not do it?

And how many people have ever said "No" to something, like, "No; I won't give my friend a drive to the airport," or "No, I won't meet up with some people," or "No, I'll never attend a Taylor Swift concert" ... but then you turned around and did it? Anybody ever did something you said you would not do?

I mean, I think we all have that experience, and we're going to talk about that a little bit later. Right now, I just want to share that we're continuing Week #3 of our four-week series on the parables of Jesus. As you all know, parables are simple little everyday stories that really help have a deeper spiritual message and truth for us to help experience of the kingdom of heaven right here and now.

And so, last week we looked at the Parable of the ... No; two weeks ago, the Parable of the Seed Growing Secretly. Last week we looked at the Parable of the Lost Sheep. And today, we're going to look at the Parable of the Two Sons.

It's in Matthew 21. And let me read it for you:

"A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' He answered, 'I will not,' but later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second son and said the same, and he answered, 'I will go, sir,' but he did not go. Which of the two did the father's will?"

They said, 'The first.'

Jesus said to them, "Truly, I tell you, the tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of heaven ahead of you. For John came to you in a righteous way, and you did not believe him. But the tax collectors and prostitutes believed in him. And even after you saw it, you did not change your mind and believe."

So, Jesus here is speaking to the chief priests and the elders of the church and saying to them: the most important thing to get into the kingdom of heaven and experience it now is a matter of what you believe and how much you believe.

And he's saying: you didn't believe in John the Baptist and you didn't believe in me. So, it's a warning of an awareness that others will go ahead of them because they do not truly believe. And so the whole message -- if you read it at face value -- is about the power and the value and the importance of believing.

Now, if we go a little bit deeper, we could look at the same parable on a metaphysical level and we'll find an even richer and deeper spiritual message for us. When we look at things -- stories -- metaphysically, it means that we look at it from a perspective that it is sharing some of our own personal spiritual struggles as we move through our everyday challenges of life to deepen our awareness and connection and our feeling of oneness with God.

In every story, each character represents some aspect in us to help us learn how to unfold and develop spiritually. The father in the story represents the Spirit of God: the Spirit of love and wisdom and goodness, and that Spirit that is in us that is always urging us to bring forth and express our highest self. The vineyard represents our mind -- our consciousness -- that we need to work on. The first son represents a part of us that can sometimes need to change its mind; to reflect. You know, to repent; to change; to learn; and discover a new perspective, and is willing to discover and see things from a different perspective.

And the second son is that part of us that is excited about wanting to create and have a better life, but not willing to do the work. You know, the part of us that's a little ambitious, but a little lazy and undisciplined. Easy to slip into temptation and not take action.

The priests and scribes represent that part of us that thinks that we've got it all together and that we don't really need to do the action. And can sometimes even be a little skeptical and think more with their head than feel with their heart.

And then the tax collectors and prostitutes represent that part of us that we sometimes look down on or take for granted, or don't think is good enough spiritually or otherwise, but still is willing to trust. That is still willing to believe without overthinking. Just believe.

And then, finally, John. And you know John's big line was, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.*" You know, be baptized and prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. You know, he knew that we still needed to do preparation work to experience the fullness of the coming of the Christ.

And how many people know that you could be more dedicated? More disciplined? And do your spiritual practice more consistently than you're currently doing it? That's the John in us that knows, "*I've still got some work to do. If I want to experience the fullness of the kingdom of heaven right here and now, there is more spiritual work I need to do.*" I saw a bumper sticker once; it said, "*Jesus is coming! Quick, look busy! Look busy!*"

And so there are three important messages I think we can learn from the Parable of the Two Sons.

And the first one is the importance to REFLECT AND EXAMINE OUR VINEYARD. To reflect and examine our mindset; our consciousness; our thoughts; and our beliefs.

Ervin Seale wrote this. He said, "*The vineyard is our own mind. Life is always calling us to work on our vineyard, especially if you want to produce something richer; something greater; and something sweeter. Or if you want to rise above our hurt and grow new possibilities. The Father is saying to all of us,*

'Go to work. Go within. Change your own psychology and work with your thoughts to create a different spirit so you can create better outcomes.'"

So, we need to examine; you know, we need to reflect. Let's look at Socrates' famous line. Remember his famous line? *"The unexamined life is not worth living."* The first time I heard that, I thought, *"My gosh, that is so harsh!"* But it's a very powerful, powerful message. And what he is saying is that life is so precious a gift -- It is so worthwhile and it is so important -- It behooves us all to pause and to reflect and look at how we're living it. And to ask ourselves: Am I really showing up in the best way in my relationship? In my family? In my work? And for myself? Am I being as loving and kind and patient with myself and others? What is it in me that needs to change to have a deeper experience spiritually?

You know, what he's really saying is that we need to take time for reflection. We need to ask ourselves: Is the current way am living really the best way? And is that going to lead me to where I actually want to go? Or is there something I need to change? Is there something I need to heal? Is there something I need to do differently to expand and open myself to the fullness and the glory of God? What limiting views or beliefs are literally holding me back from living my life more fully? What shame or guilt or blame or resentment is it time for me to let go so I could move forward and create greater things? What level of unworthiness am I feeling that not deserving of love or peace or success?

You know, self-reflection and examination of our vineyard -- of our own minds -- is not comfortable. It is not easy. But it's hugely important if we want it to be transformed. Hugely important if we want to open ourselves to greater possibilities. Socrates is saying here that life is so worthwhile, that it's important for us to pause and look at how we're living it. And ask ourselves: Is there a greater way? Are there things I need to change? Are there things I need to let go so I can move forward and truly live this full, abundant life; to fully express the God potential in me?

And so, when we begin to examine, we can realize what are the old grapes we need to let go? And what are the new grapes we need to enjoy and begin to grow and develop? How many people ever heard of Zig Ziglar? Anybody remember Zig Ziglar? I saw Zig, like, 35 years ago -- or pretty close to 35 years ago -- in Buffalo. And they had a whole thing about affirmations. And I had this card -- 35 years old. I thought I'd lost it; I found it like two weeks ago. I couldn't believe it! This thing is all worn out. And here's what the card says.

It says, "I am positive, joyful, playful, loving, kind, caring, creative, brilliant, warm, friendly, dynamic, powerful, thankful, generous, prosperous, peaceful, present, compassionate. I am well-organized. I am punctual. I am clear. I am articulate. I am expressive. I am patient. I am authentic. I am successful. I am happy. I am optimistic. I am healthy. I am active. I am wildly in love. I am brave. I am strong. I am courageous. I am trustworthy. I am smart and good looking." Just to name a few. [Congregants laugh]

And so, here's my point: is that sometimes we are holding ourselves back and limiting ourselves in a great way. And yet, we're afraid to bust the doors open and open our intentions to greater possibilities. Those words are just a fraction of the words and ideas and possibilities for all of our lives, so why are we holding back? If we're going to look and examine ourselves at the parts that we need to let go, why not go deeper in the things that we want to grow? The things we want to express and experience and embody in our lives?

The first step that we learn in this is to do some self-examination. To see: Am I living my best? Are there things I need to let go or heal or change? And what do I want to open up to? What do I want to open up to?

The second one -- the lesson -- is we've got to **BUILD OUR BELIEF**.

So, Jesus says this. Let me reread it: *"For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe. But the tax collectors and prostitutes believed. Even after you saw it, you did not change your mind and believe."*

And so, what he's emphasizing is, again, belief is the most powerful thing if you want to experience the fullness or the richness of the kingdom. If you want to bring forth the potential that is in ourselves, it is about belief.

You know I think the most powerful and empowering line in all of Scripture? It is when Jesus says these words: *"He who believes in me shall do the works that I have done and even greater things than these."* That tells us two powerful things. Jesus is saying the same potential of God -- the same Christ potential that was in me -- is in you. I mean, it is saying how powerful and amazing a spiritual beings we are that we can do the things that Jesus did and even greater! That must mean that that Spirit of God is in each and every one of us, that divine potential is in each of us.

And then the second thing I think he's saying is: If you believe in the Spirit of God in you the way I believed in the Spirit of God in me, through that belief in that Spirit, you shall do the greater things ... even greater things than I. And so what He's saying is: you have incredible potential, but it's all about your belief. How much are you willing to believe that you are the consciousness of God? How are you willing to believe that the divine potential -- the Christ Spirit -- lives and dwells in you?

Jesus said, *"All things are possible to those who believe."*

In the book of Luke, Chapter 9, Verse 22 and 23; it's a story about a father asking Jesus to heal his son. And Jesus says this to him: *"If you can believe all things are possible to him who believes that he can be healed."* Immediately the father cried and said with tears, *"Lord, I believe! Please help my unbelief."*

Lord, I believe; please help my unbelief. How many people have something in your life -- you're working towards -- that you believe can happen, but you still have a little doubt here and there? Anybody can relate to that. And so, this is where this man was. He was saying, *"Lord, I believe you can heal my son, but please help my unbelief."* Look what he does here; he does two things. He simultaneously makes an affirmation -- "Lord, I believe!" -- and adds a prayer: "Please help my unbelief." To me, that's so powerful! He affirms and prays in the same line about his belief.

And that's what we're all called to do! It's not easy. There are all kinds of things that we doubt and worry about, you know, but we have to keep building our belief. To believe that God is greater than whatever it is that you're facing in your life. To believe, with God, all things are possible. To believe that God made you; God loves you and has a plan for you; and you are worthy of God's love and God's blessings. To believe that all things are working together for your highest good.

It is important for us to take time to spend with God and to deepen our belief. To realize that all things are possible. We are loved, and amazing possibilities lie to all of us if we are willing to believe.

"Lord, I believe. Please help my unbelief."

Let's say that together: [with congregants] *"Lord, I believe. Please help my unbelief."*

With conviction, let's say it again: [with congregants] *"Lord, I believe. Please help my unbelief."*

Building our belief is a second step and second lesson.

The third one is to **BE IMPECCABLE WITH OUR WORDS, THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS**. And let's focus on our words. Notice both the sons. One said, *"I will not"* and did; and one said, *"I will"* and didn't. So, both of them said words, but did the opposite of what they said.

How many people have ever done the opposite of what you said? Anybody? Apparently five or six of us; great! You know, it's about speaking one way, but doing something else. It's like professing, *"I love God with all my heart,"* but yet hating your neighbor. You know, it is about saying, *"I respect all humanity,"* yet we gossip and to tell people about who we don't like and why we don't like them. You know, it is about us saying, *"I am a positive person; I'm always positive,"* you know, but secretly complaining about how horrible and unfair life is.

The Bible talks about it, and the word they use is "hypocrite." To say one thing and not follow through with it. And we do a lot of things without even thinking. Like you ever do this one? *"Hey, let's have lunch sometime,"* and you ever not have lunch? I had somebody; I said, *"Let's have lunch."* Or we both said it. And I just had lunch with them two months ago. It was 10 years! The distance. [Congregants laugh]

And, you know what? Like, we'd see each other all the time, and it'd be like ... it's kind of hanging there. We'd say, *"Yeah;, we've got to do lunch! We've got to do lunch!"* We're both saying it. And it wasn't negative energy between us, because we both actually liked each other and wanted to do it. But it was energy that was hanging over.

You see, when we speak words that aren't in alignment with our thoughts and actions, there's, like, energy that's hanging around that isn't healthy or positive. And we build up and do these kind of things all the time: speaking words I think we mean, but we don't always follow up or sometimes do the absolute opposite of it.

How many people read Don Miguel Ruiz's -- hands are up already! – *The Four Agreements*? He said that the first and the most important of the four agreements is to be impeccable with your word. Because he said the word is your power to create. *"In the beginning was the word."* God spoke the world into existence with the power of the word, and we speak into existence our experiences through the power of our word.

don Miguel said that you can create a heaven or hell of your experience by the words that you use. If we speak words of lack or limitation or fear, that's the kind of life we create. If we speak words of love and truth and abundance and kindness, that is the kind of life that we attract. Psalm 19, Verse 14 says, *"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer."*

Here are three things we could do to be more impeccable with our words. Number one is to be more clear and say exactly what we mean. Sometimes we could be very vague and very ambiguous and noncommittal. Sometimes saying what other people want us to say, not what we're actually feeling.

In Scripture it says this: *"Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No' be 'No.'"* It's to speak clearly and to state what it is that we mean. To share what it is we feel. To share what it is that we want; not in any harsh or unkind way, but in a kind and loving way, be truthful to ourselves; be honest with ourselves; and to be honest with others. There are so many times we speak words that are unclear and words that other people want us to say, rather than what it is that is really going on with ourselves.

Second is to avoid using words against ourselves. That we really need to eliminate all the put-downs we can sometimes lay upon ourselves. *"I am such a bonehead ... such a loser."* You know, all kinds of things! An assistant used to say, *"I am such a klutz!"* She said that all the time! I mean, we all say things kind of negative about ourselves. And we need to watch that a little bit more, and to constantly choose to speak more positively of ourselves.

We say things like, *"I could never be that successful or that rich"* or *"I could never go after and get that job."* We say all kinds of things, and we need to stop saying those things and be conscious and aware to

not say them. And look at our Zig Zigar list, and replace them with all the kind of positive possibilities for ourselves.

And then the third one is to not gossip and speak negatively of people. You know, sometimes we can judge others. Sometimes we can express our dislike. And we can talk about others and say, "Well, I'm really not gossiping. I'm just telling the truth. That's just the facts I'm saying." [Congregants laugh] And it's negative and it's harmful really to us and the quality of that relationship, but especially to us.

Do you know that, by just stopping being ambiguous; by stopping insulting and putting ourselves down; and stopping gossip -- without doing anything else! -- automatically our vibration increases and improves?!? And just adding clarity; adding positive things for ourselves; adding good things to others will elevate even higher.

And sometimes we're all going to do this, so we need to catch ourselves and find a way to help ourselves. And one of them is to remember: they are a child of God and I'm a child of God. We're both children of God. And the Christ in me honors the Christ in them. And so, we need to find a way -- when we go to that place -- to remember: "*They are a child of God and I'm a child of God, and the Christ in me honors the Christ in them.*"

We are the creators of our own lives, and the key building block are the words that we speak. And so, we need to make our commitment to all of ourselves to be intentional in the words that we speak, and to allow them to reflect the kind of life we want to live; to be more godly, more spiritual, more truthful, more positive, and more loving.

And when we begin to align our words with that highest intention, our lives begin to shift. Things begin to change. We tend to be more peaceful. We tend to be more positive and more open; more creative and more prosperous.

"I am intentional and impeccable with my words, thoughts, and actions."

Together: [with congregation] "*I am intentional and impeccable with my words, thoughts, and actions.*"

Now, half voice: [with congregation] "*I am intentional with my words ... I'm impeccable with my words, thoughts, and actions.*"

Let's do that again: [with congregation] "*I am impeccable ...*"

Oh, my God; I can't get my own affirmation correct! [Congregants laugh] Okay. Help the minister out! I will keep my mouth shut and you do it together!

[With congregants]: "*I am intentional and impeccable with my words, thoughts and actions.*" Amen.

You know, in the Book of James, it says, "*Faith without works is dead.*" And it means that faith -- or even our words or thoughts -- really aren't as effective if we don't put it into action. You know, faith without works is dead ... so that means that faith with works is alive. That, when we put our faith in action and our belief in action, things come alive: new ideas, new possibilities, new experiences of love. That there has to be action. There has to be work to be done. We need to put these things into practice; put them into motion.

There was a group of tourists that was visiting this crocodile farm. And the owner said, "If anyone jumps into the water and swims across safely, I will give them a million dollars." No one dared take this thing seriously. They thought it meant death for sure.

Then suddenly, they heard a splash; they looked, and a guy was in the water swimming feverishly to the other side with crocodiles all chasing after him. Then miraculously, he got to the other side.

And then the owner said, "We have a brave winner!"

And after the guy got his prize and went back to the hotel, the hotel manager said, "Hey, I heard what happened. Congratulations! That's so awesome! You jumped in the water and took on the challenge!"

And the man said, "I didn't jump; someone pushed me." [Congregants laugh] And then his wife smiled. [Congregants laugh] And the moral of the story is ... behind every successful man, there's a woman who pushes him. [Congregants laugh and whoop]

And so ... Alright. [Laughs] So sometimes we all need a push to take the action -- to put things into motion and make it happen. So the second son, again, is that part of us that loves the idea of spirituality and manifestation and positive possibilities, but is not always willing to do the work especially the spiritual work, the inner work.

And the first son is that part of us that knows that we're not showing up; knows that we have work to do, but is willing to change; willing to transform; willing to heal; willing to do the work in the vineyard. And the three things are: to reflect and to examine where we are and what we need to change, transform, and let go. To build our belief by believing that all things are possible; by believing that we are worthy of God's love; and believing that all things are working together for our highest good. And, finally, to be intentional and impeccable with our words, thoughts and actions. Because when our words are in alignment with the truth of who we are and who we came to be, our lives get better and better and better.

And that is the lesson from the parable of the two sons. God bless!

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