

The Nature of True Obedience

Dr. Ritch Boerckel

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Scriptural text: Matthew 21:28-32, ESV

The Parable of the Two Sons

²⁸ “What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ ²⁹ And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind and went. ³⁰ And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go. ³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. ³² 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 when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.”

On Sunday, Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey while multitudes of people are cheering, throwing down their coats and palm branches, and singing,

Matthew 21:9b “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

The whole city of Jerusalem is stirred up during the Passover time. Everyone is asking the question, “Who is this? What is the identity of this person?”

The religious leaders come to Jesus and confront Him and condemn Him for receiving praises of children, in particular, and praises from all the people, “Do you not know what they are saying? They are treating you like you are God.” Jesus response to that was, “If these did not praise Me, the rocks themselves would cry out with praise because God has ordained praise for His Messiah.” There is no question Jesus is receiving God’s coronation as the rightful Ruler and King.

On Monday, Jesus continues to present Himself as the Sovereign Lord and the Sovereign King. He enters Jerusalem again and on His way He is hungry. He sees a fig tree. It is not the season for figs, but this fig tree has leaves on it. Everyone in Israel knows when a fig tree has leaves on it, it also has figs. He comes up to this leafy fig tree and He looks for figs to eat and He finds none. The leaves are a visible promise of fruit, but this tree brags with its leaves and it does not deliver. It is a false promise and false advertising. So, Jesus, wishing to teach us regarding the nature of Israel, particularly the religious leaders in Israel, they are very much like this fig tree; they have many leaves but there is no spiritual fruit. Jesus curses the fig tree because empty profession leads to God’s judgment.¹

Jesus travels, on that Monday, up to the Temple of God and He finds merchants selling oxen and sheep and pigeons for sacrifices. But, they are selling them for exorbitant prices and He finds money changes in the Temple court. They are cheating worshippers in the exchange of money. When Jesus sees this, the zeal for God’s honor consumes Him and He makes for Himself a whip of cords and He drives out those who are selling in the Temple.² He acts like a Sovereign Ruler over God’s House and He forcefully turns over the tables. One can hear the musical clanking of the coins across the store floor,

^{13b} “‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.”

At this the religious leaders seethe and they begin to look for ways to kill Jesus.

Tuesday morning comes and Jesus travels again with His disciples into Jerusalem and they pass by the fig tree they saw earlier full of leaves, but now it is absolutely barren and naked. There is nothing on this fig tree. It is withered from the roots up. They are marveling at this, “How does this happen? Jesus simply spoke a curse upon this fig tree and now it is completely withered from the roots up.”

¹ Matthew 21:18-19

² Matthew 21:12

Jesus walks into the Temple court, likely into Solomon's Colonnade, and He begins to teach. The chief priests and the scribes and the Pharisees have been seething all night long and they have been looking for an opportunity to confront Him. They walk up to Him in group,

^{23b} “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?”

They want to know who it was to give to Him the right to chase out the money changers and those selling sacrificial animals, “Who do you think you are? Who told you had the right to teach in this Temple?” Those are great questions because not anyone had any authority to turn over the tables of the money changes and chase those selling sacrificial animals or to teach in the Temple. Who does Jesus think He is?

Jesus answers them, in Matthew 21:24, “Do you want to know who I am and by whose authority I come and teach and do these things?”

²⁴ *“I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things.”* ²⁵ *The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?”*

At this, we can almost see the religious leaders shuffle their feet and turn their heads down. We remember John the Baptist came preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. When he was preaching, all of Israel flocked to see him. They repented and they were baptized in the river. John the Baptist said,

Matthew 3:11 *“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I...He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”*

John proclaimed a Messiah who is coming; a person who is after him, yet who is before him. This is a person who is so great John himself said he was not worthy to bend over to tie the laces of His sandals, “Do you believe I came from God? I do! God sent me, but this One existed in Heaven from eternity past and He is coming. He is the Messiah. I am not the Messiah. I am just a prophet.” All of Israel heard him, the prostitutes, the tax collectors, and the sinners, and they repented. They were redeemed and brought to God as worshippers.

Jesus reminds them John the Baptist had a message for them. The people heard it and they believed and they repented and they came to worship God, “Who do you think he is?” Now they huddle because they have a problem,

^{25b} And they discussed it among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’” ²⁶ But if we say, ‘From man,’ we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet.” ²⁷ So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, *“Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”*

John had told them Jesus is from God and if they answer, “Man,” the whole city would riot because they loved John. They chose to answer with expedience over Truth. It is interesting how hardened the hearts of the religious leaders had become by self-will and by self-concern. They were not interested in Truth or in the God of Truth. They were interested in themselves.

The principle we learn from this story, which precedes the parable Jesus teaches, is God loves to give Light to people who respond to the Light already given. Do you want the Truth, then respond to the Truth has given, but God will not, absolutely, will not give more Light to those who say, “No, I do not want to respond to that Truth. It is too hard. It cuts across my own self-will, my own self-plan, and my own design for my life.” God allows the darkness to begin to descend and cover and blind all the more.

These events, particularly the cursing of the fig tree and this matter of John the Baptist, shape the context of our study. It is important to keep this in mind as we listen to Jesus tell this story. There is a father who tells his first son, “Go labor in my vineyard.” At this we can see the son is not happy with that command. It is early in the morning and he has plans for the day. He sets his jaw, looks at his father, and he says, “No! I will not. I have plans.” In this answer, this son's harsh defiance publically shames the father who loves him.

Later in the day, the son has been thinking about the way he responded to his father and he regrets honoring his father so. He changes into his work clothes and he goes into the vineyard and he begins to work.

This father goes to his second son and he gives the exact same command, "Go and labor in my vineyard today." The second son has a smiley face and he says, "Sure, dad. Anything for you. I will do it." But, he leaves his father's presence and he goes out with his friends and he plays around all day.

Jesus asks the question, "Which of the two sons did the will of his father?" This is a key question in the whole parable, "Which of the two sons honored his father? The son who does the will of his father is the son who honors him." Everyone answered Him, "Of course! This is a no-brainer. It is the first."

The father in this story represents God who owns the vineyard and who possesses the authority to command His sons to labor in His vineyard. The vineyard is Israel, a covenant of people, through whom God promised Abraham He would bring fruit which would be a blessing to all the nations and all mankind. The workers, the sons who are invited into this vineyard, are those who are invited to participate in God's work, in His labor, and in His harvest. While the direct application, in the 1st Century, is Israel and to the Nation and what is happening in that particular context, there is also an incredible application to the church throughout the world.

These sons represent two types of people to whom God gives the command to labor for His glory and for His harvest. The first represent those who openly defy God and yet who later repent and who obey Him. These, in the 1st Century, are the tax collectors and the prostitutes, people who are open sinners.

By contrast, the second son represents those who verbally agree with God's Law and they say things which seem as though they are honoring Him and worshipping Him. Yet, they turn around and they disregard the authority of God and they disobey Him. They appear to honor God, but in reality they are secret rebels.

Of three people we want to consider in this parable and from whom we can learn much about the nature of true obedience, the first is the father. **The father possesses authority to command His sons,**

²⁸ "What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' ... ³⁰ And he went to the other son and said the same."

Notice, first, the Father does not blink in exercising fatherly authority in His son's life. He does not sit down and negotiate with His son regarding what activities are going to be performed by the son that day. He simply issues a command. He does not ring His hands wondering if it is okay for Him, as the Father, to tell His son what to do that day. He simply makes the command. Notice, He does not tell the son what to do that day, but He tells the son when to do it, "Do it today."

The principle we learn from this story is: every person born into God's good world is a person born under the authority of God. As the Sovereign Creator and Sustainer and Lord of all creation, God's authority to command our life is without limitation. God gives no one the special privilege of being equal in authority to Himself. We, as prideful men and women, may wish to possess that authority to direct our own life, choose our own schedule, and to make our own way, but we do so only in rebellion to God the Father.

God has a right to command us to do whatever He wishes for us to do. God freely exercises His right to command His creatures. He freely tells us what we must do and He often tells us when we must do it. This is the rightful prerogative of God. The truth Scripture teaches us, from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22, is we are not autonomous creatures. That is what the evolutionary theories and principles would teach us, that we are autonomous creatures and we make our own way, but Scripture tells us something absolutely contrary: we are not autonomous creatures; we are accountable creatures. There is only one being who is autonomous, independent, and free and that is God Himself.

In Scripture God makes a point to declare His authority over us and the authority which gives to Him the prerogative to command us. I believe this is important for us to grab onto in our faith and understanding of doctrine. So much of sin which plagues our life is because we are fuzzy with regard who God is and His Sovereign authority over our life. So much of Scripture is given to us to reveal God, indeed, not only possesses this authority, but that He freely exercises it.

Before God gives the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, this is how He introduces them,

²“I am the LORD your God...”

He is saying, “I want you to know before I begin to give you commands who I am because if you do not understand who I am, then you are not going to pay attention to these ten words I am going to give to you regarding what you are to do and what you are not to do. I am the Lord. That is who I am. I am your God. That is who I am.”

Interestingly, if we trace through the Book of Leviticus, a book in which God gives all kinds of Law to His people Israel related to everyday life, when God gives these individual commandments, and there are so many, over and over again, those commandments are prefaced or followed by these words, “I am the Lord.” That phrase appears in the Book of Leviticus forty-nine times, “Do this. I am the Lord,” “Do this. I am the Lord,” “Do this, I am the Lord.”

For instance, in Leviticus 18, we read,

⁴ “You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the LORD your God. ⁵ You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.”

That kind of closes down all kinds of negotiations in conversations, does it not? That is God's intention. He does not want to talk with us about what we think we should do. He says, "This is what you need to do, because I am the Lord." He says this forty-nine times.

As we read the Bible there is one truth we will find out about God, one which He reveals about Himself, is God loves being God. That is awesome! Not only does He love being like God, God loves acting like God. That truth, so central to Scripture, yet it is so far from our culture and some get uncomfortable, “What do you mean God likes being like God and He likes acting like God?”

We have a phrase when people become a bit bossy, “Who do you think you are? Do you think you are God?” This is appropriate to ask that of other people, but toward God, “Who do you think you are? Do you think you are God?” “Yes, I am and like being God and I like acting like I am God. Do you have a problem with that? I am the Lord.”

Listen to what God says in other verses from Scripture,

Isaiah 42:8 “I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.”

Isaiah 44:5 “I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, ⁶ that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. ⁷ I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things.”

Every person born into God's good world is a person born under the authority of God. As Sovereign Creator and Sustainer and Lord of all creation, God's authority to command our life is without limitation.

For many, these truths regarding God's sovereign prerogative to command each one of us rubs annoyingly against our soul. Some even get angry with these truths. They love to hear "God is love". That means to many God negotiates and He talks with us, "What do you want to do? How would you like to do it? When would you like to do it?" It is an awesome truth that God is love, that He takes sinful creatures like you and I and He says, "I am working for your eternal joy." It is awesome that God is love, but God is also absolutely sovereign. That is a part of His glory.

When I was a student at Moody Bible Institute, and may God bless the school D.L. Moody founded, I was up working all night at a security desk job and I finally got to be at eight o'clock in the morning, as it happened often on Saturday morning. I was just about to drift to sleep when there was a loud, "DA! DA! DA! DA! DA! DA!" This shook my bed. At first I tried to ignore it then I realized I was not going to sleep. It just kept going and going. I went to my window and looked down and right below my window was a worker with a jack hammer in his hands, pounding away at the sidewalk below. I did everything, to no avail, to attempt to find some sleep in the midst of this annoying "DA! DA! DA! DA! DA! DA!". There was nothing I could do about it. Do you know why I could do nothing about it? I was not

in charge of the jack hammer. There were others who were in charge of that and would have preferred that sidewalk would stay in a state of complete disrepair and I would be able to get some sleep. If I had the authority, I would have stopped that jack hammer at that very moment, but I had no authority. Someone more powerful than I had other plans.

In Jeremiah 23, we read,

²⁹ “Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?”

Our natural heart prefers the sidewalk of our heart remain in disrepair. We would rather just sleep and drift along pleasantly, but God has other plans. The hammer of His Truth annoying pounds away at our pride. If we submit to it we will be blessed. If we resist it we will be broken into pieces.

I teach these truths about God’s sovereign prerogative to command our life because they often rub against our soul. If they sound like a jackhammer, “I do not like that. This is not pleasant. This annoys me to think about this,” I believe it is because God is in charge of the jackhammer working to break apart our pride and we, and our pride, want to be God. God will not let you be God, not in any way. God will always hold onto His right to command our life because God loves being God and He loves acting like God. We can choose to fight God but He will never ever let go of His sovereign right to tell us what to do and when to do it because, “I am the Lord,” declares God.”

There are two huge reasons disobedience to God is such a big problem. First, disobedience spits in the face of God’s sovereignty. Secondly, and I believe this story also bends in this direction as well, disobedience spits in the face of God’s love.

God deserves to be obeyed, first, because He is God and secondly because He is love. The person in this story giving these commands is not an employer, a governor, a security officer. The person in this story giving these commands is the son’s Father. This is a Father who has raised these boys, cared for these boys, invested in these boys, prayed for these boys, and who seeks for a joyful future for these boys. Disobedience from these sons is an egregious act of rebellion against the love of their own Father. It is the height of selfishness, ingratitude, and narcissism.

Of course, human fathers do not perfectly fulfill their roll. We sin as fathers against our children in many ways. Sometimes we even exasperate them. Yet, if it is an egregious sin for a son to defy one’s imperfect father so publically and so brazenly, how much more of an egregious is it for us to sin against the love of God who has only provided for us and only cares for us?

The father does not command his sons out of a motivation of hatred, but out of love. For God our Father, all of His commands flow from a heart of love and from what is eternally good for us. Obedience from sons connects us to the blessings of the Father. The truth we learn from Scripture is that God’s commands flow from the nature of His person. Every command God gives to us flows from the goodness of His nature. God’s commands are true because God is true. God’s commands are always wise because God is always wise. God’s commands are always right because God is right. God’s commands always benefit us when we obey them because God is love and they always flow from His person.

Considering Son #1, **true obedience can be reclaimed through repentance,**

²⁹ “*And he answered, ‘I will not,’*”

If we listen to this story with 1st Century Jewish ears, we will be shocked. I believe there may have been an audible gasp when Jesus told this story. Today we read this story and say, “Yes, some sons act this way.” But, not in the 1st Century. There were no sons who acted that way. This is not what any son would imagine to do, to stand up publically and defy their father and their father’s wishes in such an egregious manner. No son would even dare to do this, and if a son did this everyone in the community would consider that son to be absolutely despicable as a human being. What a shocking display of disdain and arrogance! As Bob Dylan wrote, “The times they are a-changin’.”³

³ “The Times They Are A-changin’”, The Times They Are A-changin’, Bob Dylan, Columbia Records, 1964.

Why did the son disobey? He did not want to go into the vineyard. We are not told exactly why he did not want to obey, he just did not want to. He was exercising his self-will against the will of his father. Perhaps he had made some plans with his friends. Perhaps he just hated vineyard work. Perhaps he had a girl he wanted to meet later. We do not know, but he looked his dad in the eye and he said, “No, I will not be there today.”

Do you ever find yourself simply not wanting to obey God? The son’s desire did not match the father’s desire and now there is a conflict. The son, instead of submitting his desire to the will of the father, decided to usurp the will of the father.

This son’s disobedience reveals three heart-attitudes which I believe are behind every act of disobedience. First, his attitude was, “I know better than my father what will bring me joy today. I do not want to because I am pursuing my joy,” which is appropriate by the way. It is appropriate for all of us to pursue our joy, but the problem is he thought to himself, “I know better than my father what is going to bring me joy.”

Second, rejection of the father’s authority will not carry any painful consequence, “I can say, ‘No,’ and everything will be fine. This will not be that bad.”

Third, the son believed his passing pleasure had greater value than his father’s honor.

The conclusion this son drew was that disobedience was a really small thing. We get the sense this son was rather cavalier and careless. He did not think of it as a big deal. These three attitudes with this conclusion, I believe, are present in every act of disobedience. I do not claim this son is conscious of these three attitudes and I do not believe that is what most people are conscious of when we disobey. The disobedience to God is rarely conscious of the attitudes inside of us which drive us forward. That is why God says our heart is deceitful.⁴ We do not know what is in there and we are driven by attitudes which are present, yet we are not understanding of them.

How do these three false attitudes enter into our heart and begin to control us? First, our heart is deceitful. Secondly, there is a powerful being whose name is the Devil, or Satan, who is crafty in luring us to believe lies about God, and lies about life. This is the reason why we need God’s Word and the cross of Jesus so badly. We cannot trust our heart and we cannot trust what is around us in this world. The only thing we can really trust to give us a guide regarding what is going to bring us joy and what is going to connect us to the honor of God and a joyful future is God’s Word so that it becomes a lamp to our feet. The only thing that gives us power to overcome Satan and his influence is the cross of Jesus.

One of the reasons why Jesus came and died upon the cross is to destroy the works of the Devil so the Devil would not have this kind of power. Apart from the cross of Jesus, apart from the Word of God, we are lambs in front of the lion, helpless and hopeless and devoured.

So, the first son answered, “I do not want to,” but later he changed his mind and he went. The words, “changed his mind,” are key to the whole parable. Later, we read Jesus saying,

³² *“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 when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.”*

Notice how this phrase, “change your mind,” which means “repent and believe” are connected together. Jesus is going to tell us this first son represents tax collectors and prostitutes. When they heard John’s preaching, openly in defiance of God’s Law, they believed John was sent by God, they believed his message, and they repented and changed their minds about the way they were living. What hope there is for us through Jesus’ story. There is hope which says God is merciful to those who would repent of their sin and come to Him for grace. The very worst son, the most despicable of people, could become the blessed son, the son who enters into the joy of the Father, restored to true obedience and fellowship.

⁴ Jeremiah 17:9

What necessary condition must be met for a rebellious son such as that, who is so despicable as to look at God defiantly and say, “I will not obey You!”? What condition must be met for that person to be changed into a beautiful worshipping who has a future inheritance forever with the Father in Heaven? It is listed page upon page in Scripture: We must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and repent of our sin. These are not two separate actions, but they are the same action viewed from two different angles. We are on a path of rejection of God and when we repent, we turn toward Christ and that is what it means to change our mind and repent and believe. That is what these tax collectors and sinners did and they were brought back into an honorable status with the Father.

John Piper writes, “Repenting means experiencing a change of mind that now sees God as true and beautiful and worthy of all our praise and all of our obedience.” Have you had a change of mind? Have you been one of these sinners who has said, “No, God, I do not want to obey You.” Have you had a change of mind? That is the absolutely essential condition if we are to be brought into the blessing of the Father’s House.

The story becomes really interesting with the second son. **The second son teaches true obedience is revealed when our practice matches our promise,**

³⁰ “And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go. ³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father?”

This son is not openly hostile to the father as the first son is. Jesus is describing people who are not openly hostile. They seem to appear by their words, by the way their external life appears, to be people who are actually honoring God. But, they never repent of their sin and they never come to embrace Jesus as the Author of Life, as God is King.

The Pharisees’ big problem was they did not know who Jesus was. That is why they asked Him, “By what authority are you doing these things?” That is the big problem. There is no obedience until there is obedience to the Lordship of Jesus. The first obedience is the obedience to believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord. They smiled and said, “We are doing everything. God, we will do whatever You ask us to do,” but then they reject God’s command to honor His Son.

Good intentions never replace simple obedience. Actions, and not promises, reveal the true nature of our heart. Saying positive words about God or to God does not make one right with God. James discusses this in his letter,

^{26b} ...so also faith apart from works is dead.

Perfection without practice is worthless. Do you ever profess without practicing? There are sometimes I do and that, Jesus says, is a grave condition. There were only two sons in this parable and only one son ended up honoring the father and the second son is the son who never, ever got it. Profession without practice is useless.

It is Tuesday and we remember earlier in that day the disciples came upon the fig tree Jesus had cursed on Monday and it is withered from the roots. What is that story teaching us? Here is a fig tree promising to have fruit on it. By every external appearance it looks like it is a healthy tree which will be able to satisfy the hunger Jesus has that day, but it does not follow through on its promises. So, Jesus curses it.

In Luke 6, Jesus asks this question,

⁴⁶ “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”

Why is that? The true nature of our heart is not revealed by our words, but our true nature is revealed by our obedience and by our actions. Jesus tells this story, in Matthew 7,

²⁴ “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶ And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

Jesus is not against public confession. In fact, we read in Romans 10:9-10, that public confession is a part of genuine faith,

⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Jesus is against public profession without any practice. He is condemning the kind of profession which dies before giving birth to the fruit of obedience, “Why do you call Me Lord, Lord? What value is that?” What Jesus is saying through the fig tree and through the story, there is no value. It is not as though there is a little bit of value.

I will ask my sons, “What is the difference between a person who has good intentions to obey their father and a person who does not have good intentions to obey their father? What is the difference between those two sons?” There is no difference between those two sons. There is no value to good intentions if they are not followed through with actions. Let us not believe we get half-credit because I believe that is what we often do and that is where the religious Pharisees were; we get half-credit, we go to church, we take notes, we agree with the doctrinal statement. There is no credit. It is an absolute curse and it withers from the root up.

Which son does the will of the father? Jesus wants us to draw a comparison between these two. If we only heard their words, who would we say honored the father? We would consider the first son to be a real stinker. He is the one who did the egregious act of publically shaming his father by saying, “No!” We would write him off and say, “Never again will that son ever be welcomed into the father’s house. It is too late. But, look at this good son.”

That is why there is this incredible needle in Jesus’ story. He loves to take our ideas and then blow up our categories. Jesus tells us, “At the end of the day, this is the son who honored the father. This is the son who received the blessing of the household and the other son showed complete dishonor and distance.”

What kind of son am I? Temporary, public rebellion is not as eternally destructive as permanent, secret rebellion. Repentance is available for both kinds of rebellion and that is the joy. The second son could have repented as well.

What kind of son am I? We cannot merely answer that question by pointing to public profession given in the form of church membership, church attendance, baptism, and religious service. The Pharisees are not passive people. They are working in the Temple, they are laboring, and they are active in many religious things. There are many good actions and good deeds being performed, yet fundamentally they disobeyed God. They rejected His Son. If we reject the Son, and it does not matter whatever else we do, we are disobeying the Father.

Someone may say, “I don’t know if it is too late for me.” I will tell you, no, it is not ever, ever too late. The mercy of God is open and available to you.

When I read this story I think something is missing. Where is the son, when the father said, “Go into the vineyard and work today,” who said, “Yes, I will do it,” and then he does it! He is not in the story. That is where I would like to have a son like that. He is not there because there is only one Son whoever said, “Yes,” to the will of the Father and then He did it and His name is Jesus.

I do not know what kind of son you are, whether you are in the first category and you are looking at God and you are pretty open about and you say, “Right now I am not going to obey You. I am going to live my own life.” Or you may be the kind of son who is secret about what you are going to do and you smile and you say, “Yes, I am going to do it,” and everybody thinks everything is great between you and God, but inwardly there is this rebellion and resistance. I do not know what kind of son you are, but that is where all of us begin, with that kind of rebellion, and it does not change until we have a change of mind about Jesus and we embrace Him by faith and the Gospel transforms us from the inside out.

It is Jesus, the Son who said, “Yes,” and accomplished the will of the Father who offers us entrance back into the blessing of the Father’s House.

Recently I had a person in the church e-mail me this question: How does a person close the gap between conviction and good intentions and obedient actions? I love getting questions like this from people within the church. They were concerning because they come to church, they listen to good messages, and then they go and they do not act upon the message. They have good intentions when they leave but they do not act upon it. How can you close the gap?

I could tell you, try harder, but that would be futile advice, horrible advice, and it would be contrary to the Gospel advice. What we need to do is to enter deeper into our change of mind and our repentance. We cannot allow our self – repentance to remain on the surface and say, “It was wrong and I should not have done that. Maybe I should have done that and I did not do it.” As long as our change of mind remains on the surface and not see how deeply we have offended God and how we need to humble our self before Him, I do not believe we will ever close the gap between our convictions and our actions.

I urge you, enter deeply into the repentance God would give you and know the power of the cross will bring resurrection to your life and you will be able to shine like bright stars in the midst of a sinful and adulterous generation, all for the glory of God.