

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

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Scriptures: Ezekiel 18: 25-28; Psalm 125: 4-9; Philippians 2: 1-11; Matthew 21: 28-32

As we gather today for this Eucharistic celebration and every Eucharistic celebration, we remember the words that guide our Christian walk – “do this in remembrance of me.” It is in the gift of remembering that we understand the great gift God has given us in His Son, Jesus the Christ. As we look back over our lives, we have an appreciation and love for what God has done in our lives and in the lives of his people.

The joy we sing about and the praise we offer is our response to the love God has showered upon us. In faith and love, we then approach the altar of God with confidence and reverence to eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ. Through and in this act of love, we are strengthened to become more fully the holy people of God. In this holy meal, we receive the Living God, and are transformed to give testimony of God’s saving power. Yes, we do this in remembrance of the One who saves us from our sins.

The beauty of this relationship with the Holy One is that God calls us by name and we respond as did our ancestors, “All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do.” [Exodus 24:3] Yet, in order for us to carry out this profession, we must learn to trust in God. We must learn to seek the will of God for the Church. We must learn the discipline of faith-filled living. For it is God’s Holy Spirit that manifests in our hearts the virtue of love.

We must be open to the movement of God in our lives and in our world. This openness is rooted in our love for God and our love for one another. In God we can do great things. We can love, even when our hearts have been broken; even when we’ve felt abandoned; even when the walls seem to be closing in on us. That we can love this way, says more about God than it does about us. The ability for us to work in concert with God’s will in our lives is directly related to our commitment to seek God at all times and in all things.

The Psalm Refrain for today helps us to understand that in order to be open to the power of God’s Spirit, we must remember what God has already done for us. It is in remembering the mercies of God that we understand and proclaim that our God is an awesome God. It is the story of salvation history, for God has provided a way for all peoples to know his mercy and forgiveness. It is the love of God.

Every time we gather as God’s people, we reflect on the sacred stories of God’s activity in directing, leading, consoling, chastising and forgiving a people He called his own. It is in these inspired stories, that we see our personal stories as an encounter with the Living Christ. When we enter into our own stories with faith, God is revealed as the One who leads us all along the way. It has become the song of God’s people, “Lead me, guide me, along the way, for if you lead me I cannot stray. Lord let me walk each day with thee. Lead me, oh lord, lead me.” [Lead Me, Guide Me – Doris Akers - Unichapel Music, Inc.] More often than not, the road we travel is winding, crooked and rough.

This journey of faith is filled with detours, potholes and deserts. It is in our struggle to be faithful to our profession to do God’s will, that we hear the parable in today’s Gospel. The Gospel has us struggle with the question, which of the two sons, did God’s will?

We can readily identify with the Gospel, because we are the two sons. How many times in our lives has this situation played out in our own stories? For on some days, we are the ones who speak the right words but don't live the right words. And still there are other days, when we refuse to do it right no matter what, but later we come to our senses to do the right thing.

Let's look back at the times in our lives, when we've turned away from God. Recall the tension, the guilt and the anxiety. Now, let us remember the words of a friend or co-worker who said [about someone else's sin], "That's why I don't go to church. The church is full of hypocrites."

Have you ever wondered why it hurts so much to be called a hypocrite? It hurts because sometimes it rings true about who we are or what we can be at times. The Gospel helps us to name and to own that there are times we don't live the values expressed by our Christian faith. There are times that we are not the best witnesses of a God who can change lives.

Yet, the beauty of our God is that He continues to call us back to holiness. Our God calls us over and over again to return to what he formed us to be – good. Through the power of God's Spirit our minds, attitudes, prejudices, and hatred can be changed and destroyed so that our transformation can give witness to the saving power of God.

So today and every day, we answer the question posed in the parable, "Which son did the will of the father?" May we always remember that the mercies God has granted to us - has made us whole. May we be co-creators of God's love by extending forgiveness to others.