

## The Parable of the Two Sons (26<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

### Ezekiel 18:25-28—The Person Who Turns From Evil Shall Save His Life

1. Israelites: accusing God of being “unjust”
2. Righteous Person: if he turns to Wickedness → “He shall die”
3. Wicked Person: if he turns to Righteousness → “He shall save his life”

### Psalm 25—Remember Your Mercies, Lord

1. A Prayer to the Lord:
2. Remember: “your mercy” and “steadfast love” (v. 6)
3. Don’t Remember: “the sins of my youth or my transgressions” (v. 7).
4. Meaning: asking God not to allow my sin to *define* me in his eyes

### Philippians 2:1-5—Have the Same Attitude as Christ Jesus

1. Imitate Christ: “encouragement,” “affection,” “sympathy,” “love” (2:1-2)
2. Avoid: “selfishness,” “conceit” (2:3)

### Matthew 21:28-32—The Parable of the Two Sons

1. The Context of the Parable: speaking to the “chief priests and elders” (Matt 21:23)
2. First Son:
  - a. First Response: “I will not” (Disobedience)
  - b. Repentance: “afterward he repented/changed his mind (Greek *metamelomai*)”
  - c. Amendment: “and went” (Obedience)
3. Second Son:
  - a. First Response: “I go, sir” (Lip-service)
  - b. Disobedience: “but did not go”
4. Question: “Which of the two did the will of his Father?”
5. Jesus’ Application of the Parable to His Audience:
  - a. Tax Collectors and Prostitutes = the First Son
  - b. The Chief Priests and Elders = the Second Son (cf. Matt 21:23)
  - c. Witness of John the Baptist: rejected by elders, accepted by prostitutes

### St. Clement of Alexandria on the Parable of the Two Sons

*The doors are open for all who sincerely and wholeheartedly return to God; indeed, the Father is most willing to welcome back a truly repentant son or daughter. The result of true repentance, however, is that you do not fall into the same faults again, but utterly uproot from your souls the sins from which you consider yourself worthy of death. When these have been destroyed God will again dwell within you, since Scripture says that for the Father and his angels in heaven the festal joy and gladness at the return of one repentant sinner is great beyond compare. That is why the Lord cried: “What I want is mercy, not sacrifice (Hos 6:6). I desire not the death of a sinner but his conversion (Ezek*

33:11). *Even if your sins are like crimson wool I will make them white as snow; even if they are blacker than night I will wash them as white as wool* (Isa 1:18). (Clement of Alexandria, *Homily on the Salvation of the Rich* 39; trans. E. Barnecut).

## Questions for Discussion and Reflection (26<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

1. Have you ever, like the Israelites, felt as if God were acting “unjust”? In the first reading from Ezekiel 18, why does God respond to the accusation with his message of the results of repentance?

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2. In Psalm 25, why does the Psalmist beg God not to “remember” the “sins of my youth”? How can sins of the past, especially from the time of youth, have a negative affect on a present relationship with God?

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3. Which of the two sons do you identify with? Why? Can you see yourself in both of them?

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## For Further Study

1. Edith Barnecut, *Journey with the Fathers: Commentaries on the Sunday Gospels Year A*. New York: New City Press, 1992, pp. 128-29. An excerpt from Clement of Alexandria’s moving interpretation of this parable.
2. Curtis Mitch and Edward Sri. *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 275-76. Brief discussion of the “Parable of the Wicked Son.”