

PARABLES: The Greatest Stories Ever Told

The Two Sons

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Discussion Notes

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OPENING

Stories have a way of sticking with us, and Jesus knew that. He would often tell stories to help the people understand who God is, who Jesus is, and who we are. He used stories to help us understand the Kingdom of God and what God values most. Jesus used fascinating stories to illustrate spiritual truths. These were stories that challenged cultural norms, shook up the religious elite, and baffled people from all walks of life. They are called parables and for the next six weeks we are going to look at the greatest stories ever told.

SCRIPTURE¹

Matthew 21:28-32 “What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He sent for the first son 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.’”

Matthew 7:21 “Not everyone who says, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

1 Samuel 15:22 “But Samuel replied, ‘Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice.’”

James 1:25 “But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it - not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it - they will be blessed in what they do.”

OBSERVATION

In the parable of The Two Sons, the first says he won’t go to the vineyard and then goes in obedience. The other says he will go, but doesn’t. He broke his promise.

Question: Tell us about a time you told God you would do something for Him and then didn’t do it. How did you feel?

Jesus applies this parable to two groups of people: religious people and the worst of sinners in the culture.

- Religious leaders see themselves as good;
- They see tax collectors and prostitutes as bad;
- Jesus says they are both bad;
- Neither group earns their way to heaven;

Religious leaders were saying the right things, like the second son, but then disobeyed their Father. They said what they thought God wanted to hear, but weren’t obedient with their lives. Tax collectors and prostitutes, like the first son, defied their Father, but eventually obeyed Him. Jesus said that they will enter the Kingdom of God before the religious leaders.

Question: Which group do you belong to? Are you happy in that group?

¹ All scripture listed is NIV unless otherwise indicated

We live in a world of promises. They take the form of promissory notes, contracts, IOU's, and our word. Contracts say, "I will do something if you will do something," but people break them all of the time. God says He will do something, but we say we will and then do something else in disobedience.

Question: Tell us about a time when God kept His part of the bargain when you didn't?

APPLICATION

This parable gives us hope. Those who have defied our Father in the past, can still turn our lives over to Him in obedience. God doesn't desire perfect people, just obedient people. He is the God of new beginnings.

Question: Is there something keeping you from beginning again with God? What is it?

There is a story in 1 Samuel, chapter 15 about King Saul. God told him to destroy the Amalekites and all that belonged to them. Saul, instead brought back the best sheep and cattle in disobedience. He justified it by saying he was going to sacrifice them on the altar of God. He said, "I didn't obey God because I did it for him." Our worship is hollow and pointless if our hearts don't change and our lives don't reflect His will. To obey is better than sacrifice.

Question: In what area of your life is God waiting for you to be obedient?

Our lives must be greater than our words. Otherwise we are just practicing religion. Don't just say what you think God wants to hear - do what you tell Him you are going to do.

Question: Have you been guilty of this? What specifically are you planning to do about this in the future?

Brennan Manning said, "The greatest cause of atheism in the world today is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips then walk out the door and deny Him by their lifestyles. This is what an unbelieving world finds simply unbelievable."

Question: What is it about your current lifestyle would you like to change?

James says that there is freedom in obedience to God's word.

Question: In what area of your life do you desire freedom?

Remember, if you are 95% obedient, you are 100% disobedient.

Question: What does this mean?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we don't want to be like the religious leaders of Jesus' time, the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Priests. Help us to keep our word and commitments to You and others and to do that joyfully. We commit ourselves to studying Your word so that we can know what You require of us and can have an even closer relationship with You. We want to be obedient in all things and ask that, by the Holy Spirit, we will be reminded that our lives tell the world we are followers of the Almighty God. In Jesus' name. Amen.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Global Leadership Summit is being hosted by The Crossing and we have until next weekend to register for this exciting experience. The Summit is Thursday and Friday, August 11 and 12 and registration is available on www.thecrossinglv.com.