

2014

- Those who heard Jesus tell this parable would have known exactly who he was talking about.
- The Pharisees and religious leaders of Jesus' day gave lip service to God, but didn't practice what they preached—all too willing to say "yes", but refusing to do what their faith required.
- 
- How many of us have known people like these two sons in Jesus' parable? And, if honest, we ourselves are too often like the son who says "yes", but never seems to quite make it to the vineyard.
- ...too immature to overcome selfishness...wanting to appear to do well, but not exercising the self-discipline to actually do it.
  
- Yet neither son in our parable today is the kind of child to bring fullness of joy to the father.
- Yes, it is the son who says "No" and then repents who in the end does his father's will.
- But who both accepts his father's requests willingly, and actually DOES what is asked of him, brings greatest joy to the father.
- The best child of God—the best person—is the one whose words match his actions...the one who declares his faith, and actually lives it.
- When I was in the Marines, what was constantly stressed was honesty...and integrity, integrity, integrity.
- For that is the only truly honorable way—both in the spiritual and the secular realms.
- Yes, you may get ahead in the secular world by hook and crook, but never spiritually. Deceit only tears down the soul.
- Concupiscence...the selfish, self-seeking animal nature within us...constantly seeks exert itself.
- But the higher part of us—the will, the soul, the Spirit of God within...calls us to rein that animal part of us into submission and to follow the higher good...the true good

- And one of the greatest goods...one of the greatest virtues loved by both God and Man...is that of humility. Humility is a primary theme of all of our readings today.
- Paul writes to the Philippians: *“Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but also for those of others.”*
- That, or course, is antithetical to a world which exhorts us to “look out for number 1”...to look first and foremost to your own advantage and glory.
- And yet...don't we have a natural disgust for such persons who seek themselves before all others...who take credit for others' efforts...who seek their own advantage above all other considerations? Why, then, would we want to emulate such a person?
- But are we not drawn to the kind...the humble...the self-effacing?
- This is designed within us by God. That is why conscience goads us into doing right, and afflicts us when we do wrong.
- 
- Paul reminds us how the Father exalts Jesus and bestows upon Him the name above every other name...so that those in Heaven and on earth and under the earth—the entire universe—will, in the end, “bow the knee” to Him...worship Him as king and God.
- Why? Was he wealthy? Was he powerful? Did He lead armies...conquer foreign lands...bathe in gold?
- No. Look at the cross and behold the reason. Humility.
- Humility before man...humble obedience to the Father. He said “yes”, and He went out and did it.
- Nothing would dissuade Him from the Father's will. Stripped, beaten, abandoned...nailed to the cross...at the mercy of the crowd which spit on Him and mocked Him.
- What did He do to receive the honor of Heaven and earth?
- *“He emptied...he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.”*

- His achievement, his goal, his triumph, his whole existence... indeed, His joy...was to do the will of the Father... and thus He fulfilled perfect love and obedience...and with that humble submission to God's will won for us salvation.
- 
- But...salvation is our opportunity, not a foregone conclusion.
- As goes the Master, so must go His disciple. As the Master humbled Himself to the Father's will, so are we called to do the same...and, indeed, that is the condition upon which our salvation hinges.
- As Jesus was humble, so we are called to be humble. As Jesus forgave (and forgives), so we are called to forgive. As Jesus honored and loved the Father beyond all else, so are we to love and honor Him as well.
- The prophet Micah: *"With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high?...Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"* (Mic 6:6-8 RSV)
- God demands few of us to go to the limits of sacrifice, fidelity and obedience that Jesus endured; indeed, we cannot...for Jesus as God accepted infinite humiliation so as to win infinite happiness for us...such is His love for us.
- 
- Look at the cross. Where is the "me" in that? There is nothing but "you"...Jesus saying, *"All that I have, all that I can give, all that I am...is yours. Take it, for I love you this much. Father, forgive them...for they know not what they do."*
- *Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* (John 15:13)

2014

- In our hedonistic and post-Christian world, obedience to God becomes ever more difficult...for no longer is there the public approbation in following God's will; in fact, we—Christ's disciples—are often disdained, ridiculed, persecuted.
- Paul tells us: “...*the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings...*” (2Ti 4:3 RSV) Indeed, that time is the present.
- So we must have that strength of heart, that integrity, that love...to remain steadfast. And God grants us that grace.
- -----
- The English poet William Ernest Henley, when facing great physical hardship, penned the poem for which he is best known—*Invictus*--a word meaning “unconquered” or “unsubdued”...a reminder of our own self-rule and ability to endure in all circumstances—in all spiritual trials and challenge. It goes like this:

□ *Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.*

*In the fell clutch of circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried aloud.  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.*

*Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
Looms but the Horror of the shade,  
And yet the menace of the years  
Finds and shall find me unafraid.*

*It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate,  
I am the captain of my soul.*

Reading 1  
[Ez 18:25-28](#)

Thus says the LORD:  
You say, "The LORD's way is not fair!"  
Hear now, house of Israel:  
Is it my way that is unfair, or rather, are not your ways unfair?  
When someone virtuous turns away from virtue to commit iniquity, and dies,  
it is because of the iniquity he committed that he must die.  
But if he turns from the wickedness he has committed,  
he does what is right and just,  
he shall preserve his life;  
since he has turned away from all the sins that he has committed,  
he shall surely live, he shall not die.

Responsorial Psalm  
[Ps 25:4-5, 8-9, 10, 14](#)

**R. (6a) Remember your mercies, O Lord.**

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me;  
teach me your paths,  
guide me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are God my savior.

**R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.**

Remember that your compassion, O LORD,  
and your love are from of old.

The sins of my youth and my frailties remember not;  
in your kindness remember me,  
because of your goodness, O LORD.

**R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.**

Good and upright is the LORD;  
thus he shows sinners the way.  
He guides the humble to justice,  
and teaches the humble his way.

**R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.**

Reading II  
[Phil 2:1-11 or 2:1-5](#)

Brothers and sisters:  
If there is any encouragement in Christ,  
any solace in love,  
any participation in the Spirit,  
any compassion and mercy,  
complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love,  
united in heart, thinking one thing.

Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory;  
rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves,  
each looking out not for his own interests,  
but also for those of others.

Have in you the same attitude  
that is also in Christ Jesus,  
Who, though he was in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God  
something to be grasped.  
Rather, he emptied himself,  
taking the form of a slave,  
coming in human likeness;  
and found human in appearance,  
he humbled himself,  
becoming obedient to the point of death,  
even death on a cross.  
Because of this, God greatly exalted him  
and bestowed on him the name  
which is above every name,  
that at the name of Jesus  
every knee should bend,  
of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
and every tongue confess that  
Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

**or**

Brothers and sisters:  
If there is any encouragement in Christ,  
any solace in love,  
any participation in the Spirit,  
any compassion and mercy,  
complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love,  
united in heart, thinking one thing.  
Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory;  
rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves,  
each looking out not for his own interests,  
but also for those of others.

Have in you the same attitude  
that is also in Christ Jesus.

Gospel  
[Mt 21:28-32](#)

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people:

"What is your opinion?

A man had two sons.

He came to the first and said,

'Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.'

He said in reply, 'I will not, '

but afterwards changed his mind and went.

The man came to the other son and gave the same order.

He said in reply, 'Yes, sir, 'but did not go.

**Which of the two did his father's will?"**

They answered, "The first."

Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you,

tax collectors and prostitutes

are entering the kingdom of God before you.

When John came to you in the way of righteousness,

you did not believe him;

but tax collectors and prostitutes did.

Yet even when you saw that,

you did not later change your minds and believe him."