

Read: Matthew 21:28-32

God Wants Us to Repent of Sin

Matthew 21:31-32

“Which of the two did what his father wanted?” The first,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, 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.”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Does this ever happen in your house? Mom or Dad come to you and ask you to do something. One of you whines, “I don’t want to!” After Mom or Dad walks away, you think about what you said and change your mind. You get to it and complete the task. Another one of you immediately says “yes” when asked, but then you go off and never do the job.

It’s good to say “yes” when parents ask. It’s good to obey when parents ask. It’s disrespectful to say no and to disobey. Which one ends up doing what Mom or Dad wanted? Which of the two sons in today’s story did what his father wanted?”

In today’s account, Jesus was talking to a group of chief priests and elders. They were people who knew a lot about God. They had been challenging Jesus with questions about who he was and by what authority he had to preach. Jesus took this opportunity to teach them. Jesus often used stories to teach. The story he shared is one that they could relate to. In the story, the one who first said “no” and then changed his mind and obeyed was like the tax collectors. They were known to cheat the people by overcharging them. In a different story, Zacchaeus changed his mind after meeting Jesus. He left his sinful occupation and repented of his sin. The original word for “repent” literally means “to change your mind.” Through the Holy Spirit’s work in his heart, Zacchaeus came to faith and looked to do God’s will because he believed in Jesus.

There were also people called Pharisees. They often bragged about keeping God’s law. They seem like the son in Jesus’ story who said, “yes.” On the outside, they appeared to follow God’s will. Jesus showed them that God wants both repentance and faith. Repentance is a turning away from sin. Faith is a turning toward God. Jesus taught them that God wants us to repent because we believe and have faith in him.

Often you do what your parents ask because you love them. There are times though, that you and I disobey our parents or others. When you disobey your parents, it can make your relationship with them hard. It’s tough when they are disappointed in you because you disobeyed. But when you apologize, that relationship feels so much better. God wants the same from you and from me. We sin every day. We disobey his will by the things we say, the things we do, and sometimes by the

things we don't do. God wants us to repent, to turn away from our sin, to change our minds about sinning. And God wants us to turn to him, to believe in him, to have faith in him. He wants this because of his love for you and for me.

It's not easy to apologize, to say you're sorry, to repent. But the blessings of forgiveness from those around us and even more, from God, are overwhelming!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for Younger Children

- Tell about a time when you said "yes" to a parent but then didn't do what they asked. Or, remember a time when you said "no" but changed your mind and did what they asked.
- What was wrong with each of these? Explain how Mom and Dad likely felt.

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Describe what you might do when you feel uncomfortable after hurting a friend or classmate or disobeying a parent.
- After you say you're sorry, explain what you are hoping for from your mom or dad or your friend.

Questions for Middle School and Above

- When you've done something wrong, do you ever wish you could go back in time and "undo" it? What makes it difficult so difficult to repent or to apologize?
- Your parents love you and want you to come to them and repent. Even more, God wants you to repent. Think of two blessings that come from repenting.

Closing Prayer:

Dear Father, it can be hard to repent, and it's hard to live with the guilty feeling after we've sinned. Thank you that we can come to you and repent. Thank you for your free forgiveness. In your name we pray. Amen.

Hymn: CW 593:1,2 – Now the Light Has Gone Away

Now the light has gone away;
Father, listen while I pray,
Asking you to watch and keep
And to send me quiet sleep.

Jesus, Savior, wash away
All that I've done wrong today.
Make me ever more like you,
Good and gentle, kind and true.