



Sept. 27, 2020 Mt. 21:23-32 & Ex. 17:1-7

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Stone, Naomi. [The Sacred Invitation](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [How Large is Your Heaven](#)

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

A Christian missionary in the Middle East used to share this parable about the two sons (only verses 28-30) with villagers that he visited and ask: "Which was the better son?" The vast majority answered that the son who said yes to his father even though he did not go to work in the vineyard was without doubt the better son. The son's reply was honorable and respectful. It was what the father wanted to hear. That he never went to work in the vineyard is beside the point, which in the Middle East is always honor. Remember that life in the Middle East is very public. Honor, the core value of this culture, requires such publicity. The dialogue between the father and his sons in this parable takes place not in private, just between two at a time, but rather in public, within view and earshot of many villagers. Like their modern-day descendants, the Middle Eastern villagers in this parable favor the respectful but disobedient son over the disrespectful but obedient son. (What is Jesus doing with this reversal of expectations?)

Pilch, John J. *The Cultural World of Jesus-Cycle A*. The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN. 1995. Page 142.

Mt. 21:23-32

23 Jesus entered the **temple courts**, and, while he was **teaching**, the **chief priests** and the **elders** of the people came to him. "By what **authority** are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you this **authority**?"

24 Jesus replied, "I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what **authority** I am doing these things. 25 **John's baptism**--where did it come from? Was it from **heaven**, or from **men**?" They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From **heaven**,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you **believe him**?' 26 But if we say, 'From **men**'--we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that **John** was a **prophet**." 27 So they answered Jesus, "**We don't know**." Then he said, "Neither will I tell you by what **authority** I am doing these things.

28 **What do you think?** There was a **man** who had **two sons**. He went to the first and said, '**Son**, go and work today in the **vineyard**.' 29 **I will not**,' he answered, but later he **changed his mind** and went. 30 Then the **father** went to the other **son** and said the same thing. He answered, '**I will, sir**,' but he did not go. 31 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. 32 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**.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: In some societies honor is the ultimate good, so there a father would prefer the son who said yes but did not go so as to look good before others. What does this say about Jesus' understanding of his Father?

PRAYER: Lord, so often what other people think determines my choices. It is only later in the quiet of my heart that I realize if I had first thought of what **You** think, a better choice could have been made. Little by little, I am starting to learn that love is the only real reason for anything. Help me as I continue to learn through my choices that you desire my loving response above all. Amen.