



LIVING THE GOSPEL

**26th Sunday in Ordinary Time
27th September, 2026**

Theme: "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the harlots will go into the kingdom of God before you."

Gathering Prayer

Facilitator: O God, who manifest your almighty power above all by pardoning and showing mercy, bestow, we pray, your grace abundantly upon us and make those hastening to attain your promises heirs to the treasures of heaven. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Matthew 21:28-32

²⁸"What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He went and said to the first, "My boy, go and work in the vineyard today." He answered, "I will not go," but afterwards thought better of it and went. ³⁰The man then went and said the same thing to the second who answered, "Certainly, sir," but did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the father's will?' They said, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'In truth I tell you, tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you. ³²For John came to you, showing you the way of uprightness, but you did not believe him, and yet the tax collectors and prostitutes did. Even after seeing that, you refused to thing better of it and believe in him.

Gospel Focus

Using some of the same vineyard imagery as last week, Jesus shares similar warnings to a different audience. While the focus of last week's gospel reading is primarily the generosity of God, it is also about the response to God's action, particularly among those who have done "what they were supposed to." Chief among these are the temple authorities, who at least exteriorly model what it looks like to follow God's law. In last week's gospel, the earliest-hired workers in the parable complain that the landowners pay them the usual wage they agreed to. This week, the second son said yes to his father initially, but in the end, does not do what is asked. The temple elders have largely ignored John's and Jesus' call to repentance, while those considered "public sinners" have responded generously, recognizing their own need for God's forgiveness. As Jesus said in last week's gospel reading, the last will be first and the first last-not because those first were not invited, but because they have refused the offer of grace.

Gospel Reflection

In the literary context of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus directs the parable we hear proclaimed today at the religious leaders who have tried to shame and discredit him publicly by challenging his authority. Jesus uses a technique similar to that of the prophet Nathan, who confronted King David about his sin with Bathsheba by telling a story about a rich man who took the one precious lamb of a poor man (2 Sam 12:1-12). Nathan invited David to pronounce judgment on a hypothetical situation, which ended up being pronouncement on himself.

In similar fashion, Jesus' parable is designed to jar the religious leaders into conversation, so that there is coherence between what they say and teach, and what they do. Earlier, Jesus had warned disciples that merely saying "Lord, Lord" was not sufficient; they must do the will of God (7:21-27). In Matthew 23:3, Jesus warns the crowds and his disciples not to follow the example of the scribes and the Pharisees, because they do not practice what they preach. Today's gospel holds out hope to the religious leaders: there is still time to turn around and make their deeds match their words.

A startling statement at the conclusion of the parable meant to jolt the leaders into a change of heart: tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the reign of God ahead of them. This saying does not refer to the actual makeup of the retinue of Jesus disciples. Rather, it is a hyperbole meant to contrast the best and the worst imaginable. The point is that the religious leaders who should be the ones leading others into God's reign are not, while those who are thought least to do so are repenting and believing and entering the reign of God.

Of course, it is always easier to see the discrepancies between saying and doing in someone else's behavior. I can smugly point a finger at the Pharisees in the gospel, or at other contemporary leader, and see their need to change. It is harder to see the lack of a match between my own words and deeds. It is easy to say yes to following Jesus, but how difficult it is to do what that demands of us. If I say I value prayer, for example, do I carve out a consistent time and place to do it? If I say I am concerned for those who are poor, how is that visible in my lifestyle choices?

Fortunately, the burden of arriving at consistency in word and deed does not fall on our shoulders alone. Christ's "yes" to the self-emptying love described so eloquently by Paul in today's second reading is the empowering force that allows us not only to say yes, but also to do the corresponding deeds. Each day Christ's "yes" is pronounced anew in us, giving us myriad opportunities to open ourselves to conversion of heart and let those we regard least likely to do so to show us the way to enter God's reign.

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading — Ezekiel 18:25-28

²⁵"Now, you say, "Why the Lord does is unjust." Now listen, House of Israel: is what I do unjust? Is it not what you do that is unjust? ²⁶When the upright abandons uprightness and does wrong and dies, he dies because of the wrong which he himself has done. ²⁷Similarly, when the wicked abandons wickedness to become law-abiding and upright, he saves his own life. ²⁸Having chosen to renounce all his previous crimes, he will most certainly live: he will not die.

Responsorial Reading — Ps 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

R: 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 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)**

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)**

Second Reading — Philippians 2:1-11

¹So if in Christ there is anything that will move you, any incentive in love, any fellowship in the Spirit, any warmth of sympathy- I appeal to you, ²make my joy complete by being a single mind, one in love, one in heart, and one in mind. ³Nothing is to be done out of jealousy or vanity; instead, out of humility of mind everyone should give preference to others, ⁴everyone pursuing not selfish interests but those of others. ⁵Make your own the mind of Christ Jesus:

⁶His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God ⁷but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are; and being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. ⁹But God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names ¹⁰so that *all beings* in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, *should bend the knee* at the name of Jesus ¹¹and that every tongue should acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Catechism of The Catholic Church

535. Jesus' public life begins with his baptism by John in the Jordan.(Cf. Lk 3:23; Acts 1:22) John preaches "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins".(Lk 3:3) A crowd of sinners(Cf. Lk 3:10-14; Mt 3:7; 21:32) - tax collectors and soldiers, Pharisees and Sadducees, and prostitutes- come to be baptized by him. "Then Jesus appears." The Baptist hesitates, but Jesus insists and receives baptism. Then the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, comes upon Jesus and a voice from heaven proclaims, "This is my beloved Son."(Mt 3:13-17) This is the manifestation ("Epiphany") of Jesus as Messiah of Israel and Son of God.

546. Jesus' invitation to enter his kingdom comes in the form of parables, a characteristic feature of his teaching.(Cf. Mk 4:33-34) Through his parables he invites people to the feast of the kingdom, but he also asks for a radical choice: to gain the kingdom, one must give everything.(Cf. Mt 13:44-45; 22:1-14) Words are not enough, deeds are required.(Cf. Mt 21:28-32) The parables are like mirrors for man: will he be hard soil or good earth for the word?(Cf. Mt 13:3-9) What use has he made of the talents he has received?(Cf. Mt 25:14-30) Jesus and the presence of the kingdom in this world are secretly at the heart of the parables. One must enter the kingdom, that is, become a disciple of Christ, in order to "know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven".(Mt 13:11) For those who stay "outside", everything remains enigmatic.(Mk 4:11; cf. Mt 13:10-15)

Sharing and Discussion

1. In the passage, the religious leaders assumed they were in good standing, yet Jesus

notes that tax collectors and prostitutes were entering the Kingdom ahead of them. Where in your life might God be asking you to drop your guards and experience a real, ongoing conversion of heart?

2. Working in the vineyard requires ongoing conversion in our own hearts first. How is God reshaping the way you walk with others—moving you away from quick judgment and toward an accompaniment that gently opens hearts to say 'yes' to Him?

3. Jesus highlighted that the tax collectors and prostitutes believed John because their hearts were open to mercy. How can our Catholic communities become authentic spaces of conversion where those far from God feel truly seen, valued, and welcomed—never labeled or looked down upon?

Closing Prayer

Facilitator: Loving God, your kindness and love for us is great. We trust you always hear the prayers we raise to you and answer them according to your will. Be with us as we work to live lives of humility and justice. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen.

Facilitator: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen

Looking to deepen your faith and connect with fellow parishioners? Join us for our "Living the Gospel" Bible study and sharing session at the parish. Together, we will reflect on God's Word, grow in faith, and journey together in fellowship.

Every Saturday

Time: 9.30 – 11.00 am

Venue: Level 3, Rm 03-06

All are welcome! For more information, please contact;

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Reflection material available on Parish Website under – (Weekly Bible Sharing - Living the Gospel)

References for the Living the Gospel Reflection:

- 1) Gospel notes taken from the Navarre Bible
- 2) Gospel reflection and Living Liturgy are taken from "Living Liturgy for Sunday and Solemnities" by Order of St Benedict. Published by Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota. Reprinted with permission.
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