**“The Third Son”**

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

Philippians 2:1-4, 14-18

Matthew 21:23-27 (28-32)

Pentecost 18

Adding a final answer to the question of “who are You, Jesus” posed by the “chief priests and the elders of the people in the temple”, He continued with a parable in the verses after where I stopped reading a few minutes ago. “What do you think?”, He asks them back. “A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind and went. And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in a way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him”.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

The Gospel account … and, for that matter, all of this weekend’s readings including our Psalm, 25 … are sanctification and not, really, justification. In other words, these all are instructive regarding God’s expectation of Christians once made Christian by the free gift of grace. They are lawish, in demand of responding to God’s gift with a life worthy of that gift we’re given.

**Text**

There were “**two sons** that a man had” we’re told. **Neither** was a peach. Appropriately sanctified **just the one finally** acting out his father’s directive, but **neither** (beginning of father / son relationship to its proper continuance) was much beyond, one, a **hypocrite** and the other, originally, a **late-growing-up brat**.

Both brothers were **justified**. The extra Gospel (past the one printed in our bulletin insert) says the two were “sons of a father / a man”, and you all know that one never contributes anything to becoming a child of a parent. You’re born into that relationship, sometimes adopted into it, but never go find a mom or dad to hire for the task. Children get what they’re given, and to have a parent / dad is blessing without equal … to be gifted, by adoption or re-birth, a heavenly Father you can call Dad (since He calls you son or daughter), well that’s just gift to you.

The **Ezekiel reading** was written to the “House of Israel”. Those are **covenanted as kids for God**, not Egyptians or Persians or any other pagan group of people outside of that gracious gifted relationship. We know why that gifted special relationship occurred: it was to provide for the “Seed” of the coming and necessary Savior through a lineage of people. Because of that “Seed”, everyone surrounding it would be blessed by proximity, so brothers and sisters were expected to know themselves that way justified and live that way (**sanctified and appropriate / Holy** lives).

The **Philippians text** instructs new Christians what that’s supposed to look like in a **sanctified life (Jesus as example at that point)**, and how they became Christians was not the point without adding the Gospel in the additional skipped over portion of the chapter I’ll note at the end of this message.

But the question that Jesus was responding to was “**who are You** to be instructive as a brotherly example and by what authority do you come to save and justify / make possible adoption and son- and daughter-ship to people because You make it possible?”

For that, the Lord added a parable about **two** … let’s say **THREE** … **brothers** / siblings … all assumed in the **same relationship to a same Father** … reacting in differing ways. In other words, these children had the same “family” standing, and were (all) to **know that** and **reflect it** and **be that**, with all that such a standing means and ought to look like / always … they were all **justified or natural** kids of the Heavenly Father … and each one should look like that / noticeably / fully sanctified and holy always and in all ways from front to conclusion, without exception, perfect expressions of heavenly childhood matured and obvious.

Ezekiel says the “House of Israel” **didn’t act it**. Jesus implied to leaders in Jerusalem’s temple that **they didn’t act like it**. Paul (to the Philippians) said that **we ought to**.

Jesus **DID!** By “what authority?” Well, that’s **the difference**. Not just an example, but **Divinity becoming a Third Son for this story**, Jesus was the **Son of God** **become, also, the Son of Man**, the **Third of brothers** who’d, naturally (of His own glory from Heaven), not only **SAY “YES” to the Father’s wish for Him to “Go and do proper work in the vineyard of creation”**, He **DID “GO” which is the incarnation and pure work all the way to being the sacrificial perfect Son**.

**Application**

We all know stories of parents properly preparing for the best, bringing children to a baptismal font to start a commitment God’s way, providing the promises of covenant and sonship or daughter-ship with the Heavenly Father, but **not reinforcing it or it ultimately seemingly fully rejected by the youth**, so saying “yes” to God, but the follow-up is clearly a “no”.

We also know wonderful stories of repentance after outright verbal rejection, so a **finish strong** all the way to an eternal glory gifted to those who persevere in faith.

The **second one of these two choices is clearly the successful one to keep gained toward a “Paradise” that’s beyond his life**, and **that, certainly, should be one of the takeaways of today’s hearing**. But before getting to that sanctification continuance in humble faithfulness, thankful before God, we have to **start first with the justification earned for us to even get there (by the Third Son having come to be us and dying for us to make any of the rest Good possible**. “**The Third Son” has to be the memorable focus** or else none of the rest in, even, this conversation makes sense … but it does make sense because He was (and is) the willing and obedient-all-the-way-to-sacrificial-death-and-then-resurrection “Third Son” of the world’s story …

… and Paul speaks of this in the Epistle Lesson portion skipped-over from what was read to describe this “Third” of the Sons wonderfully. These verses are exact to **accentuate the answer, best**, to the initial question “who are you, Jesus” that earth itself asks about … and then, also, our participation in that fact. So hear these familiar words in **the context of this: “The Third Son of “us the other two”** … so from Philippians chapter 2, verses, now, 5-13:

“**Have** **this mind** **among yourselves**, which **is yours in Christ Jesus**, who, though **He** was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, 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.

Therefore, my beloved, as **you** have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure**.”

That is repentance and humility and service (useful under Him) talk: **BEING** what God has made us to be by the gracious act of His Son’s death, thankful that it was for us by Him, having gained sonship in His name to be faithful after that in +Jesus’ name. Amen.