

Take 2 with Jesus,

Daily Reflections on the Sunday Gospel

Week beginning Sunday 27th September

Jesus calls us to conversion.

This week's reflections are based on the Gospel reading for 26th Sunday, Year A (Mt 21:28-32). Further reflections on this Gospel can be found at <http://www.prayasyoucan.com.au/sunday/show/547/gospel>.

Sunday

*Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people, 'What is your opinion?'
(Mt 21:28)*

These people saw themselves as the enemies of Jesus. They were plotting for his downfall. How does Jesus see them? As people to be respected, but also as people needing to be challenged. So, he tells a parable that invites conversion. It is confronting, without being rude, aggressive or insulting.

Loving Jesus, you sometimes challenge me. and this can be difficult but you treat me with respect. When I need to challenge, may I treat others as you have treated me.

Pray the words that Jesus taught us...Our Father, who art in heaven...

Continue your prayer through this day by pondering on how you confront people.

Monday

*Jesus said, 'A man had two sons.
He went and said to the first, "My boy, you go and work in the vineyard today."
(Mt 21:28)*

How normal: a father waking a sleeping son, directing him to the ordinary work of the farm. Most parents know this situation. Jesus uses such ordinary circumstances to teach about the workings of the human heart. Too often, we expect great teaching to come from exceptional people who will amaze us but what we really need to do is reflect on the reality of our own lives.

Loving Jesus, walk with me in the normal circumstances of my life and let me see how my thoughts and actions can reveal the workings of my mind and heart.

Pray the words that Jesus taught us...Our Father, who art in heaven...

Continue your prayer through this day by seeing how the ordinary events of your life can be a parable inviting to live more deeply in God's ways.

Tuesday

*Jesus continued,
'He went and said to the first, "My boy, you go and work in the vineyard today."
He answered, "I will not go," but afterwards thought better of it and went.'
(Mt 21:28-29)*

What I find peculiar here is the reaction, or rather non-reaction, of the father. I can't imagine my Dad not reacting to such a response. And this points us to one place where God differs from human beings: he respects the freedom of our will. God will not force us to be moral, to pray or to be good. That is to be our choice. And God will be patient with us and forgiving towards us when some of our responses are, at first, failures.

Loving Jesus, show me the wonder of free will. Let me be in awe of how much you respect me, even when I make the wrong choices.

Pray the words that Jesus taught us...Our Father, who art in heaven...

Continue your prayer through this day by pondering on the free will God has given you.

Wednesday

*Jesus continued,
‘The man then went and said the same thing to the second
who answered, “Certainly, sir,” but did not go.
(Mt 21:30)*

Aristotle said, ‘We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence is a habit, not an act.’ Tweaked, just a little, this saying points to the heart of this parable. It is our actions that reveal the state of our hearts and God can read both our hearts and our actions. We may be taken in by a person’s manner, looks or words but God won’t be.

Loving Jesus, let me realise that you truly know and understand me as I am. Help me to be true to my best desires and commitments.

Pray the words that Jesus taught us...Our Father, who art in heaven...

Continue your prayer through this day by pondering on how God understands your actions.

Thursday

*Jesus continued,
‘Which of the two did the father’s will?’ ‘The first’ they said.
(Mt 21:31)*

Again, Jesus tries to draw priests and elders into reflecting on their own actions and responses. He doesn’t just tell them what they should be thinking, how they should be acting...yet. He first asks them how they understand this parable. Then he will use their understanding to show them where their failure lies. In teaching this way, he hopes that they will come to understand their own neediness for themselves.

Loving Jesus, let me reflect on my own life so that I may see and understand what truly stops me from loving you and others.

Pray the words that Jesus taught us...Our Father, who art in heaven...

Continue your prayer through this day by noticing how you reflect on your own actions.

Friday

*Jesus said to them,
'I tell you solemnly, tax collectors and prostitutes
are making their way into the kingdom of God before you.'
(Mt 21:31)*

These words are addressed not just to those self-righteous priests and elders. They are addressed to us as well, whenever we allow pride to warp our love of God and neighbour. And for us, who are practicing, prayerful religious people, self-righteousness is a besetting temptation. What is true for tax-collectors and prostitutes, is also true for us: only God can save us.

Loving Jesus, give me a heart and a life that lets me enter into the kingdom of God.

Pray the words that Jesus taught us...Our Father, who art in heaven...

Continue your prayer through this day by pondering how self-righteousness might creep into your thinking.

Saturday

*Jesus said,
'For John came to you, a pattern of righteousness,
but you did not believe him, and yet the tax collectors and prostitutes did.
Even after seeing that, you refused to think better of it and believe in him.'
(Mt 21:32)*

The teaching, preaching and life of John had challenged these religious leaders. They rejected it. The transformation of those they despised as sinners was another call to conversion. Twice they had effectively refused to hear the God's call to them. They were so caught up in their insular world that they could not see that God could work in ways other than their own.

Loving Jesus, let me see where your grace is at work in our world. And wherever I see it at work may I celebrate it and learn from it.

Pray the words that Jesus taught us...Our Father, who art in heaven...

Continue your prayer through this day by looking for God's grace at work in unexpected places.