

# A Vineyard Parable

## The Parable of Two Sons

Matthew 21:28-32

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*“But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. 29 He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. 30 And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. 31 Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. 32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.”*

### INTRODUCTION

Reminder:

- A parable is a narrative of imagined events used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson.
- To explain a deep spiritual truth or reality by placing an earthly occurrence in parallel, that drawing a comparison so one may see a deeper truth. (Australian Oxford Dictionary)

### THE SETTING

A vineyard which must be worked that it may be fruitful.



### THOSE INVOLVED

- A certain man – a father – a picture of God the Father.
- Two sons - two types of responses to a call for workers.
  - Hasty responses with differing outcomes.

- John the Baptist – a righteous preacher, lifting up Christ and calling for a baptism of repentance from sin which would result in a transformed life.
- Israel – Sinners; hearing, reacting, responding in repentance and faith. (Matt 21:32)
  - The nation – lip service only = liars.
  - Religious leaders – giving appearances as hypocrites and refusing to get involved. (John 1:12)
- The Father and the Lord Jesus who call for repentance, faith and involvement in God’s work.

## BACKGROUND TO THE PARABLE

In Isaiah 5:1-7 God speaks of Israel as a beautiful vineyard which He had established on a very fruitful hill. v4, *“What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?”*

God dealt with this unfruitful vineyard in judgement. v5, *“And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: 6 And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. 7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.”*

This was the poor condition Israel was in when John the Baptist began his work. John called the nation to repentance and challenged them to prepare their hearts for Jesus’ coming and involvement in His vineyard.

## THE PARABLE

Matthew 21:28, *“But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard.”*

He calls the hearers to think about the parable.

The certain man is the Lord Jesus.

The two sons represent the two types of humanity:

- Those who respond and get involved in the vineyard of the Lord.

- Those who refuse but give appearances of involvement – all talk and all outward show. This type fails to give their heart and refuses to get involved in the real work of God.

God was seeking to do a NEW work in his vineyard, beginning with the ministry of John the Baptist. His message and ministry was to raise up a prepared people who had faced their sinful condition, confessed it publicly and been baptised in Jordan to identify with this NEW work of God.

*1, In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,*

*2, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

*3, For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*

*4, And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.*

*5, Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,*

*6, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.*

*7, But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*

*8, Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:*

*9, And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.*

*10, And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*

*11, I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:*

*12, Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*

John even baptised Jesus; this is where Jesus' ministry began as He identified with our sins and did the Father's will.

Matthew 3:13-17,

*13, Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.*

*14, But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?*

*15, And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.*

*16, And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:*

*17, And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

The work in the broken down vineyard began with John, the forerunner of the Lord. The NEW work began as the Father called his sons to be involved in the vineyard of the Lord.

Matthew 21:32, *“For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.”*

Jesus was particularly challenging the “religionists” who gave appearances, but failed to get involved. The Scribes and the Pharisees both refused John’s message and would not reconsider even when they saw a wonderful work among the notable sinners who’s lives were transformed and who later followed Christ.

❖ The Father wants sons who will go into the harvest **TODAY**.

- In the New Testament the work begins with God’s vineyard, Israel.
- The message went first to those of the house of Israel. A certain work would be done with the Jews, but then expanded to the Gentiles.
- The prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled as The Lord took His hand off the vineyard.
- In the New Testament church age the vineyard is left and the field of the world wide ministry of Christ is focused upon.
- We read Jesus instructions to “Go ye into all the world” and His promise of “I will build my church.”
- It is now up to us to evangelise the world! All believers are to fulfil their task in the work of Christ.
- We are the Sons of God and we are to be involved in the harvest. The field is white, ready for harvest!
- The challenge of this parable is worthy of our meditation.

## THE FATHER'S TWO SONS

### A. THE FIRST SON

- Given a command – **GO**
- The needy task – **WORK**
- The urgency – **TODAY**
- The field – **IN MY VINEYARD**
- A hasty answer / (verse 29) **I WILL NOT**
- Gave no excuse, but excuses are many, such as, too busy, too lazy, not gifted, not called, not obedient, rebel minded, too hard.
- Afterward he repented and went to work.

### B. THE SECOND SON

- Father came to him
- Same command, same task, same urgency and same field.
- His answer was “I go Sir” – sounded obedient.
- His action showed that he followed his own hidden agenda and he “went not.”

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#### Warning to us on the use of words

*Give an honest answer; do not use your words to deceive. 2 Corinthians 1:17,  
“When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I  
purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea,  
and nay nay?”*

*You will be called to give an account for every word.*

*It's amazing that, when it comes to the work of God, people feel OK about  
misleading others about their Christian service.*

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- The second son gave a formal answer that came from the head and not the heart.
  - He had all the paper work in order and “all his ducks in a row.”
  - **But** – all was for show.
  - Formalism and manners were in place. How nice he appeared!

- He was hypocritical – he wanted the FRUIT but not the work.

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### Note

*Many believers say, “Why is the church not growing?” and “Where is the fruit?” They do not realize or accept that they need to be fruit bearers and involved in the work.*

*When God’s children refuse to work, no fruit comes in. If they fail to accept Christ and sound doctrine, only wild grapes result.*

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## THE EXPLANATION OF THE PARABLE

Jesus began with a question.

V31, *“Whether of them twain did the will of his father?”*

The first son becomes illustrative of those who went to work in the vineyard.

God’s gracious invitation to the Kingdom came through John the Baptist. V32, *“For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.”*

The publicans and sinners did not respond at first, but after re-considering the poor condition of their lives, they humbled themselves; repenting, receiving and responding in baptism.

V31b *“Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.”*

The humble ones enter the kingdom before the self-righteous hypocrites who used their religion as a cloak for their sin and their failure to be involved in God’s work.

Also in verses 31&32, Jesus fully endorsed the ministry of John the Baptist to be of God as he prepared men and women for the Church Age and hence for Christ himself.

John came in the way of righteousness, but they did not believe him. Those who did believe him were harlots, sinners, publicans, the weary and the heavy laden. Their lives were changed but the self-righteous still did not re-consider. Nothing

has changed!! Religious Israel refused John's message as a prophet and forerunner of the Messiah. Their unbelief and failure to be involved in God's Vineyard work continues to this day. They say they are the Father's chosen sons, but in reality they are unregenerate and have chosen to reject the Saviour's and the Father's work.

## **DEVELOPMENTS IN THE VINEYARD / ISRAEL IS GOD'S VINEYARD**

- God is working in the vineyard.
- Israel is beginning to respond to the vinedresser.
- There is a great returning to the land, planting of the land and protection of the land.
- Bible prophecy is being fulfilled before our very eyes.
- There is a restoring of the worship of the ONE TRUE GOD.
- Plans for the temple are ready.
- God has promised to take care of His willing workers in the Day of His Power.
- Nations are against modern Israel, but God will protect His own in the Day of His Power.

## **A CHALLENGE TO BELIEVERS**

1. Are you truly a son/daughter of God?  
Salvation brings son-ship. John 3:3, "*Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*"  
True salvation affects the heart and soul, not just the head!
2. True sons are servants and, as such, should be HARVESTERS.
  - There is joy in harvesting.
  - There is joy in soul-winning.
  - We are called and commanded to get involved in the harvest.
3. We need to avoid those who are talkers only. It is easy to say "I'll go" but do nothing! We should be doers and not just hearers.

So far as believers are concerned, there are two types of children; OBEDIENT & DISOBEDIENT. There is a lot of talk, but little action. Hypocrisy abounds. People say they go, but do not re-consider the will of God. In His mercy and grace, He is the Lord of the second chance. Don't miss the will of God for your life!

## **TODAY GO WORK IN MY VINEYARD!**

**MEMORY VERSE:** James 1:17, *“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”*