

FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters

metanoia

(n.) the journey of changing one's mind
heart, self, or way of life.

The 'two sons' Jesus speaks of in the Gospel are an allegory for the prostitutes and tax collectors on one hand, and the chief priests and elders on the other.

Asked to work in the vineyard, the first refuse at first, but then have a conversion of heart and go. The second say they will go to the vineyard, but then do not.

Actions speak louder than words. It's one thing to say 'Yes,' but another thing to actually do so. The two sons in the Gospel represent two dispositions, two attitudes. One is a 'Yes man,' who will always say what he thinks others want to hear. He is not free to say what he really feels, he wants others to like him, he is afraid of correction. He does not want to rock the boat, he is politically correct, never makes waves. He will promise you the earth, but his words are only words. His 'Yes' is only a mask for the 'No' deep within him.

This is not surprising, because 'Yes' in the scriptures means 'Amen,' or 'So be it,' 'Yes' means 'I concur,' or 'I agree,' or 'I commit myself.'

No one can say 'Yes' to God without the grace of Jesus Christ. He is the 'Amen,' he is the one who says 'Yes' and follows up on his word by his actions. Jesus Christ is the only one who has committed himself to God, he is the one who works in the vineyard.

In Christianity it is not we who can say 'Yes' to God by our own strength. No one can commit themselves to follow God, to work in the vineyard by their own gumption or bravado, by their own efforts. Sure, they can say they'll do it, but will sooner or later realize they are unable to follow through.

This is not surprising, because our nature is fallen, damaged. Who can work in the vineyard of the Lord and produce its fruit with their own efforts? If the fruit of the vineyard is grapes, grapes that will become wine, wine that will become for us in the Eucharist today the blood of Christ, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Who can enter the vineyard and produce this fruit, this love? Who can forgive but God himself? No one can say 'Yes' to doing this, unless they are delusional.

Who can say 'Yes' I will go into the vineyard and produce its fruit? One person's vineyard is the fact that she's a Mom, for another that he is a Dad; for both of them that they are married! The vineyard maybe that you are a Cop, or a Dentist, or that you work in the financial district, or that you are in politics, or a grandma, or that you are a teenager in High School. Your vineyard may be the fact that you are retired, or a priest, or that you work in an office. For any of us to say 'Yes, I will go into the vineyard and produce fruit' – i.e. 'I will always love at home, I will always be patient with the kids, I will never get angry at work, I will love God above all things and always love my neighbor' – by my own effort... is living in the clouds. This is you and me.

The other son is sincere, he says 'No' when asked to work in the vineyard. He realizes that he is unable to go, because he knows his weakness, he knows that he is wounded, he knows that he loves very little, indeed he knows that he loves himself more than others. He knows he is perhaps selfish, that he can get angry; he has often held resentments. He joins in gossip, and bad mouths others, even though he knows it's not the right thing to do. He knows that he can be violent, that he has a sharp tongue; he does not admit to mistakes easily, but prefers to blame someone else. 'No, I cannot go into the vineyard, I am unable to produce the fruit of love! This, also, is you and me.

'But afterwards he changed his mind and went.' This verb 'to change' is a translation of the word 'Metanoia.' More than '*changing one's mind*,' Metanoia means conversion, turning away from sin, from selfishness, anger, resentment, pride. Metanoia is a radical experience of conversion, a turning away from anything that impedes God from producing the fruit of the vineyard -love- in us. Metanoia is turning towards God, and seeing that in him all things are possible. Metanoia is an experience of God's love for us, wounded, and weak as we are. Metanoia leads to love of others, to forgiveness. Not because we are good, but because God has been good to us. And the Good News is that this, also, can be you and me.

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