

26TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Matthew 21:28-32

Change Your Answer

There are moments in life when we wish we could go back. Go back and change something we said. Change something we did. Take back the anger. Undo the mistake. Make a different decision. There are moments when we look at our lives and quietly think: **“If only I had done things differently.”**

And maybe that is why today’s Gospel is so beautiful. Because hidden inside this very simple story is one of the greatest messages of hope Jesus ever gives us: **Your first answer to God does not have to be your final answer.** A father goes to his son and says, “Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.” And the son says, “I will not.” No excuse. No hesitation. Just **no**. But later something happens. Maybe he sees his father’s face. Maybe his conscience begins bothering him. Maybe he realizes, “I was wrong.” Whatever happened, Jesus simply tells us: **He changed his mind. And he went.**

I love those words, because that is the Gospel: **He changed his mind—and he went.**

How many times have we said no to God? Maybe not with our mouths, but with our lives. God said, “Forgive,” and we said no. God said, “Come back to me,” and we said no. God said, “Let go of that sin,” and we said no. God said, “Trust me,” and we held on even tighter. God said, “Love that person,” and something inside us said, “Anyone but them.”

Sometimes we carry those “no’s” for years. **We carry regrets.** We carry mistakes nobody else knows about. **We carry things from our past that still make us ashamed.** And somewhere along the way we begin believing that because we said no yesterday, **God could not possibly want our yes today.**

But listen carefully to this Gospel: **The Father comes looking for both sons.** He does not give up on the first son because he said no. And God has not given up on you either.

That is the tenderness of God. He keeps coming back. Through a Scripture that suddenly touches your heart. Through a Confession you have been avoiding. Through someone you need to forgive. Through an unexpected moment of grace. Through that quiet voice inside saying: **“Come back.”**

And perhaps that is what someone here needs to hear today: **It is not too late. You are not too far away. Your story is not finished.** Peter denied Jesus three times—and became the rock of the Church. Paul persecuted Christians—and became an Apostle. The thief on the cross spent a lifetime away from God—and with only hours left, turned toward Jesus. **God has done extraordinary things with people who changed their answer.**

And He can do the same with us. So maybe today we should stop asking, “What have I done?” and start asking: **“Lord, what are You asking me to do now?”** Maybe today is the day to forgive. Maybe today is the day to go to Confession. Maybe today is the day to come home. Maybe today is simply the day to whisper: **“Lord, I have said no to You ... for far too long.”**

Because the beauty of our faith is not that we have always said yes to God. The beauty is that, no matter how many times we have said no, **the Father still comes looking for us.** He still calls us. He still wants us.

And today ... **we can change our answer.**