

## Matthew 21:23-32

The gospel reading finds Jesus entering the temple courts, preaching and teaching there as He often did. While He was doing so, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him. They were unable to challenge what He was saying and doing, so they “shifted the discussion” with their own questions of authority... “By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?” (Matthew 21: 23)

Wow! Authority? Jesus could have really “unloaded on them” regarding His authority! He could have told them... “I am the Great ‘I Am!’ Before the world began, I was, and after the world is gone, I will yet remain! I Am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I was in the beginning with the Father. I am the ‘Word made flesh’ Who dwells among you with truth and grace. I created the World and everything in it – everything visible and invisible.” He could have said all of this and much more, but He didn’t. Rather, He simply asked them a question about authority... “John’s baptism – where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from men?” (Matthew 21: 25)

Jesus’ opponents huddled together and discussed how to answer Him. If they answered that John’s authority came “from heaven,” Jesus would justly accuse them of not following John’s heavenly teachings, and if they answered “from man,” they were afraid of the reaction of the crowds because they knew the people believed that John was a prophet sent by God. So, the cowards simply replied to Jesus, “We don’t know where John received his authority.”

“Then Jesus said, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.’” (Matthew 21: 27)

Jesus told them that by their flagrant, rebellious disobedience to God’s will, it would be much more difficult for them to enter heaven than it would be for openly sinful people (thieves, prostitutes, tax collectors, murderers, etc.) who later repented, believed in Him and followed the will of God.

To make His point, He told the story of a father who asked his two sons to go out and work in the field. One said, “No,” but later repented, changed his actions and went to serve as his father desired. The other son immediately replied to his father’s request by saying, “Yes,” but ultimately turned his back on his father’s will and refused to go and work. Which did the will of his father? It was the first son who, at first, disobeyed but who later repented and showed his love for his father by doing his father’s will.

Which type of son (daughter/servant) are you? Do you say, “No,” to God’s call to you but change your mind and go? Or do you say, “Yes,” but never go to do the will of your Heavenly Father? We say we will be “in” God’s Word, but how faithful are you in your personal Bible reading, in family devotions or corporate Bible study? We know God’s desire that we worship regularly (frequently/weekly) but the attendance of so many is so infrequent and irregular! We should serve those in need, but it seems so hard to find enough volunteers who are willing to serve. At this time we are finding it hard to find those willing to sit on the PCC , people willing to share the role of Warden , someone who is willing and able to take on the role of treasurer . If more are

not willing to come forward the responsibility for these tasks fall on the few who are already on the PCC. Ask yourself does God value St Paul's ? Do I value St Paul's? I know that God values St Paul's by the work that is done there in His name. What am I doing to show I value St Paul's and the work that it does???

And how about voting? Studies tell us that 75 % of all Christians don't vote when they have an opportunity! Rather than taking our biblical Christian values with us into the Voting Booth, many sit on the sidelines and let others make important decisions which negatively affect our country, our freedoms and our lifestyle! As Jesus called the religious leaders of His day to repent, so He calls us to do repent today!

He calls us to humble ourselves at the foot of His cross – to come repentantly and confess our failure to live as His sons and daughters! And He does forgive us! His sacrificial death and resurrection welcome us back into the loving arms of our forgiving Heavenly Father. Through His grace we are made right with God; are united in Christ; and are made one in humble service.

Our greatest joy, in turn, is to “**Live as Sons and Daughters**” of the King

Amen