

## My Two Sons? An Abbreviated Parable in Matthew

Jesus addresses this parable of a man who had two sons, to “the chief priests and the elders of the people-in the Temple Area” (Matthew 21:23)

Matthew 21:28-32 “What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He came to the first and said, ‘Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.’ He said in reply, ‘I will not,’ but afterwards he changed his mind and went. The man came to the other son and gave the same order. He said in reply, ‘Yes, sir,’ but did not go. Which of the two did his father’s will?” They answered, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Amen, I say to you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you. When John came to you in the way of righteousness, you did not believe him; but tax collectors and prostitutes did. Yet even when you saw that, you did not later change your minds and believe him.”

Is this a simpler five-verse abbreviation of Luke’s lengthy parable of the Prodigal Son and Elder Son (Luke 15:11-32). Luke begins this story too with, “A man had two sons,” (Luke 15:11)?

Did parables have ‘stock’ introductions like typical proverbs or moral stories? Was ‘a man had two sons’ a version of other catchy introductions like ‘man walked into a bar...’ or ‘On my way to work yesterday’? Other stock intros to parables: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho....” Luke 10:30, or “A sower went out to sow....” Luke 8:5

In Luke 15, the younger son leaves, comes to conversion, and returns. The Father welcomes him back and yet the elder brother becomes angry and leaves, to make the Father go into the field. What is the ending of parable? Does the elder son realize, repent & return also?

### 1). Father goes out to Younger Son

Luke 15:20 “While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him.”

### 2). Father goes out to Elder Son

Luke 15:28 “when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him.”  
Merciful Father says twice “Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found” First in verse 23-24, and then in verse 32!

In Matthew 21, Father goes to both sons to issue work requests, and first son rejects him but changes mind and goes to work. Father goes to second son with same work request and this son receives command agreeably yet does nothing. So, who is doing will of Father?

Matthew 9:37-38 “Jesus said to his disciples, “The harvest is abundant but **the laborers are few**; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.”

## **ABC’s of Gospel – 1) Actions, 2) Behavior & 3) Conduct are more important than words!**

Matthew 7:21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

1 John 3:18 “Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”

James 1:22 “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”

John 1:14 Jesus is the “Word made flesh”!

1 Thessalonians 1:5 “For our gospel did not come to you in word alone, but also in power and in the holy Spirit and [with] much conviction”

1 Corinthians 4:20 “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.”

Mark 1:22 “The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.” (about Jesus-he taught demonstrated ‘experience’).

**But if you do speak & give a verbal response, follow through and complete the claim with act!**

Matthew 12:3-37 "I tell you, on the day of judgment people will render an account for every careless word they speak. By your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

Matthew 5:37 "Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.' Anything more is from the evil one."

James 5:12 "But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath, but let your "Yes" mean "Yes" and your "No" mean "No," that you may not incur condemnation."

Early Christian Church's practice of refusing to take oaths was based on the humanly subjective and tentative certainty of following through on definitive claims (humility dictated fallibility).

Sirach 23:9 "Do not accustom your mouth to oaths, or habitually utter the Holy Name."

Matthew 5:33-36 "Again you have heard that it was said to your ancestors, 'Do not take a false oath, but make good to the Lord all that you vow.' But ***I say to you***, do not swear at all; not by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Do not swear by your head, for you cannot make a single hair white or black."

*Why not swear on heaven, earth or Temple? They are God's, not ours at all as any collateral.*

Psalm 24:1 "To Yahweh belong the earth and all it contains, the world and all who live there"

Psalm 24:4 (Jerusalem Bible translation) "The clean of hands and pure of heart, whose heart is not set on vanities, who does not swear an oath in order to deceive." ('clean of hands' as a descriptive phrase to indicate 'hands are not in the deal-no entanglement or interest').

Interesting Note: Jesus avoids the oath demand of the high priest in his own trial as found in

Matthew 26:62-64 "The high priest rose and addressed him, "Have you no answer? What are these men testifying against you?" ***But Jesus was silent.*** Then the high priest said to him, "I order you to tell us under oath before the living God whether you are the Messiah, the Son of God." Jesus said to him in reply, "You have said so. But I tell you: From now on you will see 'the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power' and 'coming on the clouds of heaven.'" (quoting Daniel 7:13 'coming on clouds' Psalm 110 'seated right hand').

## 'Will of the Father' Major Theme in Matthew's Gospel

Matthew 6:10 "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven"

Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven."

Matthew 12:50 "For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Matthew 18:14 "In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost."

Matthew 26:42 "My Father, if it is not possible that this cup pass without my drinking it, your will be done!"

Similar Passages from John's Gospel

John 5:30 "I do not seek my own will but the will of the one who sent me."

John 6:38 "I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me."

## Call to Humility

Matt 19:30 "many who are first will be last, and the last will be first." & Matt 20:16 "the last will be first, and the first will be last." 1 Cor 10:12 "Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall"