

Twenty Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time – A – 2020
Ezek. 18.25-28 /// Phil. 2.1-11 /// Matt. 21.28-32

→she faced the crowd defiantly – the taste of fear caught deep in the back of her throat.

--her heart pounded so wildly that she could barely hear the curses that filled the air.... “harlot!” //// “sinner!” //// “stone her!”

---a clod of dirt hit her on the cheek and the circle began to close in

→and then a voice quiet and calm asked....”*What has this woman done*

and suddenly...everything changed PAUSE

he shifted uncomfortably, aware of the leaf tickling his left ear and the fly buzzing around his head...just out of reach

→”*this body was made for eating not climbing*” he thought

yet hours earlier he had scrambled up the tree like an 8 year-old **determined** to see this man that everyone was talking about

it didn’t matter that the people of Jericho hated him

--it didn’t matter that they called him a traitor, and all kinds of other names.

→it didn’t matter that the children were giggling and poking his fat legs that dangled over the branch.....

Especially when a voice –warm with laughter—shouted up at him.... “*Zacchaeus, come down from there!...I am coming to your house for supper tonight!*”

and suddenly...everything changed PAUSE

→he had always obeyed the law...just ask anyone

→he read the scripture, followed the rules, and kept to himself

→he prayed when he was supposed to pray...he gave what he was supposed to give...he ate what he was suppose to eat....he stayed far away from sinners and always paid his debts....he was righteous...he was just...he was honorable...just ask anyone and yet one day, he heard a man say.....

“This people honors me only with their lips, while their hearts are far from me...listen and understand...what goes into the mouth does not make a person unclean...but rather what comes out of it

and suddenly...everything was different PAUSE

---they didn't want to work that day...it seemed as if they were always working for the old man....bending over the vines....carrying water...plucking leaves...checking for mold and bugs....grinding, thankless, backbreaking work

→no matter how many times they went into the vineyard...there was always more work....more vines....more grapes....more dust to swallow

---well not today...NO SIR...there are a lot of things to do...and places to go.... that seem a whole lot more interesting....

→they both had had enough and they said...NO...and then one changed his mind and returned to the field....

and suddenly...everything changed and was different PAUSE

and Jesus asked his listeners and he is asking you and me...*which one did God's will?*

→throughout his life...Jesus tried to teach...that while our words matter---our actions matter even more

---he tried to show us that while our past may be important---it is what we do today....and tomorrow that counts

→*the woman who sinned no more /// the tax collector who repaid his victims /// the scrupulous young man who learned the meaning of mercy /// the son who returned to work*

→these were the people who not only heard the words of Jesus, but lived them

they were people....who despite the mistakes of their past...made the message of Jesus a part of their future

→these were people who, although they had sinned...continued to hope for redemption

→criminals in heaven....thieves as the just ones....traitors praised as holy...sinners forgiven while the righteous are chastised?

→if we truly listen to the message and words of Jesus Christ....can be pretty shocking at times

→because in one sense.....it suggests that sitting here on Sunday may be less important to God than the choices we make and actions we do on Tuesday

---it suggests that arguing, or disagreeing with someone over any of the multitude of minute issues we have each and every day....may be less important than the way we treat one another...the way we treat those we love and those we don't

--it suggests that talking about poverty and worrying about justice and feeling sorry for the broken and the wounded..... may be less important than actually living a life of justice and charity and compassion

and it suggests...that no matter how unsavory our past

no matter how many sins we have committed

no matter how many times we say NO----

---there is always time to hear the message

there is always time to change our minds

and there is always time to go back out into the field and do what

we are suppose to do as the people of God....