

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

The Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Oftentimes families will have special places where pictures of family members are displayed. Sometimes it's on a wall. Sometimes on a table or mantle. If the pictures were taken at different times, viewers may comment on how the family has changed. Babies and toddlers become teens and young adults. Wedding pictures of a mom and dad evolve into grandparents holding grandchildren. Change is the name of the game with family.

Today's Gospel reading is a parable describing two people who changed their minds. In general, to change one's mind can be a very good trait. It's a sign of learning and wisdom. But we can easily be stuck or mired in old ideas that don't reflect changed situations. Good parents are always adjusting their parenting style to better connect with children. If they treat a teen in the same way they did when he or she was a two year old, the teen will immediately balk. This can lead to family conflict, especially when the teen is correct to feel offended. Families are great places to study the positive and negative traits of human nature.

A Gospel Word for the Home

Matthew 21:28-32

Once again, Jesus nails it. He tells the parable of two sons who were told to do something by their father. One said he would do what was asked, but didn't. The other son said "no," but changed his mind and did what was asked. Who was the obedient son? It was the one, of course, who *did* the right thing. While not specifically stated in the Gospel reading, it suggests that actions speak louder than words. Actions are also the better test of virtue.

But this parable is also about changing one's mind. When Jesus (and John the Baptist before him) came with a message from God, many of the religious leaders turned a deaf ear to what was proclaimed. While those at the bottom of that day's virtue scale, tax collectors and prostitutes heard the message and changed their minds and their lives. They were open and receptive to God's word and invitation to change.

How often do we have to change our minds and hearts? Well, it's a daily challenge. It's a matter of being alert, awake and perceptive. To be faithful to the truth, we will always be learning, always adjusting, and always changing. That's what it means to be a responsible person, a responding person.

Parent Survival

Those who can solve a complex mathematical equation are considered very smart. Those who read and understand a deep philosophical treatise are also thought of as bright. But those who are able to successfully deal with the complex reasoning of parenting may be the most brilliant of all. Interpersonal interaction is intricate and complicated. It requires the full range of thought processes. We parents engage in a form of calculus that is indeed challenging.

We are forever trying to make the best decision and take the appropriate action that will benefit our children. We want to acknowledge this because it is rarely praised in contemporary society. We easily acknowledge an athlete's or a musician's great performance. But what about the time when a parent successfully negotiates a shopping adventure with a frisky five year old or engages in a decent conversation with a surly teen? No applause is heard. No awards are given. Yet such accomplishments are akin to placing a man on the moon. If society won't acknowledge the feats, we parents need to cheer for each other, and affirm our greatness.

by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Car or Meal Talk

Present the question that Jesus asks about the two sons (Which one was obedient?) and see how your children answer it. It's a good test of clear thinking.

One-Line Prayer

Dear God,
Open our eyes to what's new each day, so that we can see its wonder.
Amen.