

October 1, 2017 Twelfth Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year A.
Homily - Chris Alberti

In tonight's Gospel Jesus is talking to the elders and the chief priests in the temple. He tells them a parable about a father and two sons. The father asks both sons to go and work in the vineyard. One son says "no", but then goes to the vineyard. The other son says "yes", but then doesn't go.

So... What's going on? The son that says "no" actually goes to the vineyard, and so he is the good son, while the son that says "yes" doesn't go to the vineyard, and so he is actually the bad son. Why try to confuse things like this? Why does it even matter what the sons say? Wouldn't it be enough to talk about what the sons did since what they do is what actually matters?

What Jesus is trying to do is to point out the hypocrisy of the chief priests and the elders. He insults them to their face pretty heavily saying that they are worse than some of the people they despise the most. Imagine... if Jesus came to us today and said: you are worse than a prostitute and a tax collector? Wouldn't that be shocking?

Imagine that. These are chief priests, that spent their whole life studying the word of God. And yet they are so far wrong about what the word of God really meant? How is this possible?

But I think that Jesus's wake up call was not addressed only to the chief priests of two thousand years ago. It is addressed to us, here, even today.

As I see it, there are two worlds that exist side by side in the life of each one of us. The world of the son that said yes, and the world of the son the said no. I'll call them for short the yes-world and the no-world.

The yes-world we always say yes.

The yes world is **everyday** life, or my everyday life at least. It is a world ruled by human laws and authority. And it is riddled with hypocrisy and contradictions.

In the yes-world we always say yes to God with our words, on on paper, but then... we do the opposite with our actions.

In the yes-world, we claim with our words that everything is fair, while it's ruled by financial interests and profit, and very few people have too much, and almost everyone have not enough.

In the yes-world, we claim that we punish people that steal, but then don't we award the biggest and most successful thieves in our countries with the most power and the highest salaries?

In the yes-world, we claim that punish killers, but then we send troops and drones to kill in foreign nations, and actively destabilize foreign governments.

In the yes-world, we claim to value truthfulness and honesty, but then we find out that our elected government officials lie to the people, all the time, violating the freedom that they claim to be there to protect.

In the yes-world, we have schools and universities, dedicated to law and economics, and we claim that they are there to study morality and justice, but in reality there is no justice. The cry of the poor goes unheard. Laws are only used by the powerful and the educated to maintain their dominance over the weak and uneducated.

In the yes-world, we do recognize that we have problems, but we claim that we are on the right track, and actually on the verge of solving our problems... and that things are just about to get better... but then... we find out that global warming is actually getting worse, that more and more species are wiped from the

planet, that inequality continues to rise, and the leaders we choose are bent on rolling back every good thing they can find.

The yes-world, where our minds are most of the time, is a world of pharisees and hypocrites. And that, I think, makes us pharisees and hypocrites too. I think Jesus with this parable wants to shake us and wake us up as well, and show us that what we are doing in everyday life, is ****not**** the always the Will of God.

On the other side there is the no-world, or the world of the son that said no. The no-world is a world completely upside down. It is the exact opposite of the yes-world.

In the no-world, we reject the powerful and the winners, and worship a God that is not powerful and is not a winner, but is literally dying on a cross.

In the no-world, we reject human wisdom, and the high centers of learning, just like Jesus rejected the chief priest. Rather, it is the poor and the uneducated that become our saints. The truth doesn't come from famous universities, instead it usually comes from the least likely places.

In the no-world, we reject books and treatises. Did Jesus come to write books and treatises? No. Instead, we speak in parables and symbols. Because we recognize that the things that is really worth talking about go beyond human reason, and cannot be fully expressed with just human words.

In the no-world, we reject leaders, and we do not even try to be leaders. Instead we recognize we are lambs and we cannot do anything without God, who is our only shepherd.

In the no-world, we reject social hierarchies, and we consider a good thing to be the least of everyone around us. As Paul says, we love each other by being humble and by putting our interests below the interests of others.

So how do we travel from the yes-world to the no-world? How do we completely change our long standing habits? How do we eradicate hypocrisy from our minds and our hearts? Is it even possible?

Personally, I don't know. If I knew how to do it, I would. I try to do the Will of God, and I try to obey God, but, at the end of the day, I always fail. I mostly get caught up in my daily work and social life and I don't have time or I forget to go to the vineyard. And in fact, even when I want to do the Will of God, how will I even know what God wants me to do? How do I know which preacher to listen to? To which interpretation? To which church?

After all, didn't the church condemn my sexuality for more than a thousand years, for no reason at all? Am I going to trust this church blindly with the salvation of my soul?

So I don't have a solution, on how to leave the yes-world and enter the no-world, but I would like to nevertheless leave you with an idea. Maybe the problem is that we try to "obey" the Will of God. But Will of God is more like light. You can't really obey light. What you can do, is open your hearts to the light of God, and allow God to change you from the inside. When the light of God enters inside you, like in the eucharist, it will break the chains that bind you to this world of suffering, because these chains, this hypocrisy, is just a shadow. When we open our hearts to God our hypocrisy and everything that is evil inside us will be transformed, and we will find out we are already in the kin_dom of God.