

26th Sunday of the Year Homily 1st October 2017

The message from the first and third readings of today's Mass are that each one of us is responsible for his own actions. And secondly, that God welcomes a change of heart, conversion, even at the 11th hour. The parable was told to show up the hypocrisy of the chief priests and elders of the Jews. But the message is a warning for all of us at all time down through the ages. Lip service of God will not merit Heaven. Nominal Christians are not working in the vineyard of the Lord. A time will come when they will have to render an account of their stewardship. What defense will they offer then for their laziness? For their lack of action? Will they use the flimsy excuses that they use today to excuse themselves for their lack of commitment to God? The kind of excuses we hear are, "We did not realize that we were such sinners. We were so busy with family and personal matters that we had no time for prayer. We were led astray by bad example. We did not want to appear different from others. We hoped that we would put things right sometime in the future."

These excuses will be of no avail when we appear before the judgment seat of Christ. The just Judge will expect of us that we have worked diligently in his vineyard. While we still have time, we should ensure that we are active laborers in the vineyard of the Lord. While we are still in this world we are wide open to God's mercy and God's grace. If we have said in the past, "I will not go into the vineyard today," then there is still time for us to change. We can repent of our desire not to go into the vineyard. We can become active members in the vineyard of the Lord, and commit ourselves to serving Him in our daily lives. If we do that, we will receive the mercy promised by our Lord in today's parable. He says that the tax collectors and the prostitutes will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven because they listened to the Word when others did not.

From the Gospel, we know that a tax collector, Matthew, became an Apostle and a Saint. We know that a prostitute, Mary Magdalene, became a true follower of Christ and a great saint. And down through the years, there have been so many saints who have changed their lives, turned from sin and turned to God. We think of somebody like Saint Augustine, when his young life did not engage with his faith or Christianity, but instead he enjoyed the pleasures of the world, only to realize that we have been made for God and our hearts of restless still bear rest in Him. And down through the years there must have been countless millions of people who had come to realize that they needed to change their way of life, that they accepted God's grace and that they died in His embrace. And from our personal experience, we know of many people who have turned back to God at the 11th hour, who have been converted often on their deathbeds. God's mercy is always forthcoming, and we too should be open to His mercy.

We do not know how much time we have got left, so we should try to change our ways, to turn from our sins, to place ourselves at the mercy of God, to accept His grace into our lives and to repent. We thank God today for His great mercy to us. For not having called us at the time when we were sinners, when we had turned our backs on Him. We are open to His grace, we are open to His mercy, we accepted into our lives and we will try to give Him not just the lip service of the hypocrite, but the genuine and sincere service of a true follower of Christ.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

So we stand for the creed.