THE YES GOD IS LOOKING FOR

Sermon Script | Matthew 21:28–32

Speaker: Priest Jesse Blaine | **Date:** September 27, 2026 | **Location:** Christ the King Anglican Church, Denver
Scripture Reading: Matthew 21:28–32 | **Occasion:** Family Sunday Homily

1. Opening Prayer & Introduction

Good evening. Good evening. Will you pray together with me?

Lord, as we just sang those words for the procession of the gospel, we pray that they would be true in our hearts as we open your word: that every thought, every motive, every intention would be purified by your Spirit; that you would purify our hearts to receive from you and hear the word that you have for us as we walk with you towards eternal life—life in the kingdom, life to the full. So guide us, Lord, by your truth and in your word this evening. We pray in your name. Amen. Amen.

Well, good evening, everyone. If I haven't had a chance to meet you, my name is Jesse and I get to be the priest here, and it's always a joy to worship here together with you, especially now that the weather's dropped down a few degrees. It's always a joy again sitting up, standing up in the front to hear you singing, having all of our hearts and our minds turned to the Lord together. So thank you for blessing me, and I pray that you're blessed here this evening.

2. The Parable of the Two Sons

This evening we are looking at a very simple parable. This Sunday, as Stephen mentioned, is Family Sunday. So this is a simple message—it's more of a devotional, an invitation for us to search our own hearts, to allow the Holy Spirit to move within us to reveal to us the areas which we might be hiding from God. And it's going to circle around Matthew chapter 21 here, the parable that Stephen read here for us. It's a very simple message called **the parable of the two sons** (or I like to say the *other* two sons, because typically people think about the prodigal sons).

The father goes to two sons, and he asks the first son, "Please go and work in the vineyard for me, work in the vineyard". The vineyard is an image for the kingdom. And the first son says to him, "No, I will not go," and then later he changes his mind—some translations say he regretted what he did—so he turned, he changes his mind, and he ends up going to work in the vineyard. Then the father asks the second son. The second son, in public when the father asks him, says, "Yes, I will go," and then ultimately does not go.

So Family Sunday, kids in the room, all those that you are coloring: **which son did the will of the father?** The first son who said no and ended up going, or the second son who said yes but never went? All right, that's our Sunday School lesson for today. The first son—it's obvious, Jesus says it himself—it is the first son. Even

though he said no in public, he ends up doing the will of the father. This is the one that Jesus commends.

> **Core Theme:**
> "God is not just looking for our polite public yes; He's looking for a life that actually turns and goes with Him in every aspect of our lives."

3. Cultural Context: Honor & Shame

Now, it's interesting: I got to share on this message when I lived in Asia eight years ago in Cambodia. I learned a different perspective on this parable when I had the opportunity to live in Asia and have my bosses be people from Singapore. They taught me that one of the things that they recognized clearly was that the first son didn't just offend the father, but he committed a major, grievous error and fall from grace.

When I read this passage in Cambodia and talked about how the first son rejected his father in public, you could hear an audible gasp in the room: "Oh my goodness, I cannot believe he did that!" Because in these kinds of cultures in Asia and in ancient Near Eastern culture, one does not dishonor one's parents like this. In an honor and shame culture (which is closer to the ancient Near East where Jesus is speaking), honor and saving face was held with the highest regard—much more so than our present culture. If someone rejects their father in public here, it's a bad thing, you get scolded, and then you go reconcile—it's an issue, but not that big of a deal. But in this culture, to have your father, who is the owner of this vineyard and patron of many things, say "I want you to go work in this vineyard," and for you to reject him in public was a major disgrace.

This is why Jesus makes such a strong connection here—it wasn't just a lightweight thing where you need to go apologize, but a full-on disgrace. He says the first son represents a group of people that are so far gone, so beyond repair, so filled with disgrace, without hope, and fully outside: **tax collectors and prostitutes**. Jesus is saying that these are like the first son: so far away from being acceptable that you might as well write them off.

Yet in verses 31 and 32, Jesus says that when these people heard the gospel and were called to repent, although they were in a state of disgrace, they turned and began to actually follow and live into the word of God, embracing the work God had for them in the kingdom. On the other hand, the religious people and Pharisees—who knew the rules and knew to save face in public—were like the second son, acknowledging God with their lips while their hearts were far from Him.

God is not just looking for a polite public yes or even a mental assent to a set of propositions. **He's looking for a life that actually turns and walks and goes with God and participates with Him in the kingdom.**

4. The Vineyard and the Call to Bear Fruit

The vineyard here is the kingdom of God. It's a kingdom that bears fruit. In His great desire and grace, God invites us to go and bear fruit together with Him, to work in the kingdom together with Him. All through the Old Testament, prophets and religious leaders said, "Yes, we want that kingdom!" When the Pharisees came on the scene, they saw themselves as the guardians who would help usher in the kingdom.

Yet when Jesus came and said, "I bring the kingdom; repent and believe, for the kingdom of God is at hand in me," those same people who said publicly that they respected God rejected Jesus altogether. Meanwhile, those who had lived a life of long refusal and lots of "noes" in public were the ones who actually turned and walked together with Him. This is the meaning of the parable.

5. Two Postures: Long Refusal vs. Unfinished Yes

This parable speaks to us in two main postures:

1. **To those who live in a life of long refusal**
2. **To those who live with a regular unfinished "yes" in their lives**

1. The Life of Long Refusal

If your life towards God has been a long "no"—or characterized by a set of disgraces that make you feel completely written off, disgraced, cut off, and like there is no coming back—hear this mercy and good news: **there is no amount of "noes," disgraces, or turning away that can keep us from knowing God's love, forgiveness, and invitation.** The call is constant: turn, move, the invitation is present. Just because you've said no doesn't mean you can't turn now.

2. The Unfinished "Yes"

I know many of you say yes to God and genuinely try to live in a way that honors Him. Taken as a whole, your lives are a "yes" in public and an actual working in the vineyard. But to those saying yes, this parable asks a finer question: **Have we allowed the loving invitation of God to enter every single aspect of our lives and inhabit the fullness of our person in Him?** Are there rooms in the house that we are saving for ourselves?

I'm reducing my time online. The other day I saw a YouTube video showing how easy it can be to repair your house, where a guy turned a window into a door in 30 seconds. I thought, "Oh, it's just that easy—just cut into the wall!" Then I read the comments, and one guy said, "This project would take me eight months, 45 trips to Home Depot, and a very angry wife". I thought, *that's my life!*

How much of our interior life looks exactly like an unfinished home project? We have good intentions, we say yes, we even begin the work, but when it gets hard or confusing, we move on or put up a tarp so it just functions. We learn to live with unfinished rooms in our hearts.

> **G.K. Chesterton wrote:**
> *"History is not made up of ruined completed buildings; it is made up of half-built villas that began with ideals, but ran out of money when the going got tough. The Christian ideal was not tried and found wanting; it was found difficult and then left untried."*

The "yes" that Jesus is after is the **renovation of our whole beings**. Are there ambitions we keep feeding that don't honor God, grudges we nourish, fears we allow to control us, or ways we give and serve that we retain for ourselves? This parable calls us to let our yes be yes to Christ for our whole being.

6. Transformation & Closing Prayer

One of the core hopes of this church is that we would become people who are completely, fully, and utterly transformed by the loving work of Christ within us.

Philippians says: **"For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."** The good news we can trust is that **God is the master builder**. He is the Author and Finisher of faith, and He who began a good work in us will finish it and see it to completion. God's work within us does not depend on our abilities or commitments, but on the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let us open up all the doors of our hearts and souls to allow Christ into every part of who we are.

> **Closing Prayer:**
> *Lord, we thank you for your grace, mercy, and love. Despite our constant failings, you always invite us to know you, to turn, to be healed, and to walk together with you. Fill us by the power of your Holy Spirit. For those areas we withhold due to fear or pain, heal our hearts and allow us to trust you. As we trust you with our souls for eternal life, let us trust you now with our lives for our transformation. Be blessed and glorified in our lives, in your great and holy name. Amen.*