

TWENTY SIXTH SUNDAY - A - OCTOBER 1, 2017

"THE FATHER CAME TO THE FIRST SON AND SAID, 'SON, GO OUT AND WORK IN THE VINEYARD TODAY.' HE SAID IN REPLY, 'I WILL NOT'....

LET ME BEGIN WITH A STORY THAT I'VE TOLD ONCE HERE BUT YOU'VE PROBABLY FORGOT IT AND IT IS VERY RELEVANT

IT TOOK PLACE IN THE 60'S DURING LYNDON JOHNSON'S ADMINISTRATION.....1960's

PRESIDENT JOHNSON CALLED THE HOME OF JOHN KENNETH

GALBRAITH, WHO WAS A NOTED ECONOMIST, AND THE HOUSEKEEPER

ANSWERED THE PHONE.

LBJ SAID, "I WOULD LIKE TO SPEAK TO JOHN"

HOUSEKEEPER REPLIES, "HE'S TAKING A NAP AND HAS LEFT STRICT ORDERS NOT TO BE DISTURBED".

PRESIDENT JOHNSON SAYS....

"WELL, I'M THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, WAKE HIM UP."

HER RESPONSE - A SIMPLE: "I'M SORRY, MR. PRESIDENT, BUT I WORK FOR MR. GALBRAITH, NOT FOR YOU". THEN SHE HUNG UP...

SAYING NO TO ANOTHER CAN BE QUITE A CHALLENGE - ESP. SAYING NO TO A PERSON IN AUTHORITY LIKE THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES....

WHO USUALLY SURROUND THEMSELVES WITH "YES MEN AND YES WOMEN"

BUT THE ABILITY TO SAY NO CAN PROVE TO BE VERY IMPORTANT AND ULTIMATELY VERY FRUITFUL.....

AS WE FIND OUT IN TODAY'S GOSPEL STORY....

ALTHOUGH MORE DIFFICULT, IT IS CERTAINLY BETTER THAN SAYING YES WHEN WE DON'T MEAN IT...AND DON'T CARRY THROUGH WITH IT.. IT IS ALMOST ALWAYS EASIER TO SAY YES ISN'T IT THAN IT IS TO SAY NO....

ESP. FOR ALL OF US WHO ARE PEOPLE PLEASERS..

US, RELIGIOUS TYPES.....

WHO ARE LIKE THE PHARISEES, THE RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES IN TODAY'S GOSPEL.

WHO LOVE TO BE WELL THOUGHT OF AND LIKED BY OTHERS

IT IS HARD TO SAY NO, WE HAVE A REPUTATION TO PROTECT...

EVEN THOUGH RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT PEOPLE WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY SAYING NO ARE MORE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE STRESS, BURNOUT AND EVEN DEPRESSION....

BECAUSE OF BEING OVER COMMITTED.....BEEN THERE, DONE THAT...

THIS GOSPEL STORY IS FOR US....

POINTING OUT THE VALUE OF BEING ABLE TO SAY NO....

EVEN WHEN IT'S NOT FOR A GOOD REASON -

PROVIDED, OF COURSE WE ARE WILLING TO CHANGE OUR MIND AND EVENTUALLY, OUR COURSE OF ACTION

TO LEARN AND GROW FROM OUR MISTAKES WHEN WE MAKE THOSE...

THE ABILITY TO SAY NO WHEN WE DO HAVE A VALID REASON, AND TO SOMEONE IN AUTHORITY, IS A SIGN OF MATURITY.....

E.G. REMEMBER AMERICAN EXPRESS TV ADVERTISEMENT.....

MIDDLE AGE COUPLE AND ELDERLY COUPLE AT A RESTAURANT...

END OF DINNER, THE BILL IS PLACED BETWEEN THE TWO MALES....

BOTH PUT THEIR HAND ON THE BILL....

INNER DIALOGUE ENSUES.....

THEY ARE OBVIOUSLY FATHER AND SON....

FATHER, I'M RETIRED AND HE CAN HANDLE IT NOW.....

*I'VE JUST BEEN PROMOTED, HE'S RETIRED, IT'S TIME FOR ME TO
HANDLE THE CHECK....*

SON SAYS NO TO THE FATHER....

*THIS ABILITY TO SAY NO CAN BE THE EQUIVALENT OF WHAT WE
DESCRIBE AS "FINDING OUR VOICE"....*

BEGINS WITH THE TERRIBLE TWO'S.....

BUT WE HAVE TO LEARN IT AGAIN AS WE DEVELOP

IT'S A PROCESS - FINDING OUR VOICE....MESSY AT TIMES

*TO ME THIS SIMPLE GOSPEL STORY IS A REASON WHY I BELIEVE WE CAN
DESCRIBE THE GOSPEL AS REVOLUTIONARY AND FULL OF DEEP
WISDOM....BEYOND JUST HUMAN WISDOM*

*THIS STORY POINTS TO THE EXTRAORDINARY CHARACTER OF THIS MAN
WE CALL JESUS....*

*AS HE POINTS OUT THE VALUE OF SAYING "NO" - NO TO HIS OWN
FATHER, REALLY, SAYING NO TO GOD.....ISN'T IT??*

*IN THAT SENSE, WE HAVE THE DIVINE, IN THE PERSON OF JESUS,
POINTING OUT THE VALUE OF SAYING NO TO THE DIVINE...*

AND KEEP IN MIND, HE WAS COMMITTED HIS WHOLE LIFE TO DOING THE WILL OF THE FATHER....

BUT SOMEHOW, HE ALSO SAW VALUE IN SAYING NO TO THE FATHER....

OF COURSE, PRESUMING THE INDIVIDUAL

LEARNS FROM THEIR EXPERIENCE AND CHANGES THEIR MIND....

BUT STILL....

ISN'T THAT A COUNTER INTUITIVE NOTION OF THE DIVINE???

WE WOULD NEVER COME UP WITH THAT ON OUR OWN, WOULD WE???

E.G. IT TAKES A VERY BIG, MAGNANIMOUS, EXPERIENCED PARENT, I'M

SURE, TO SEE ANY VALUE AT ALL IN A DAUGHTER OR A SON SAYING NO

DIRECTLY AND HONESTLY TO THEM - BUT NOT FOR A GOOD REASON.....

NO, MOM, NO DAD - I CANNOT DO THAT....

PROBABLY, IF THE CHILD CHANGES THEIR MIND.....

AND, AFTER THE FACT A TRULY SELF-LESS PARENT

MIGHT BEGIN TO SEE SOME VALUE IN A NO.....

THAT'S WHAT WE HAVE IN THIS STORY....

THE CONTEXT OF THIS STORY IS ALSO IMPORTANT....

IN A SENSE, IT IS A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH FOR JESUS...

THE STORY OF THE TWO SONS HIGHLIGHTS A CONFLICT BETWEEN TWO

KIND OF JEWS

1. THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND SCRIBES ARE VIEWED AS FAITHLESS LEADERS BY JESUS BECAUSE OF THEIR COLLABORATION WITH THE ROMANS AND ABANDONING THEIR OWN PEOPLE - THEY HAD PROMISED TO CARE FOR THE JEWISH PEOPLE BUT HAD FORSAKEN THEM, BETRAYED THEM...DID NOT HEED THE MESSAGE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

2. THOSE VIEWED AS SINNERS, THE PROSTITUTES AND THE TAX COLLECTORS HAD RESPONDED TO THE MESSAGE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST AND WERE REPENTING.....

AND THEN DECADES LATER MATTHEW WAS EVEN INTERPRETING THIS PARABLE AS A WAY OF INCLUDING THE GENTILES WHO WERE RESPONDING TO THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE AFTER SAYING NO....

THEY WERE THE SON WHO SAID NO BUT EVENTUALLY CAME AROUND AND WORKED IN THE VINEYARD....

I ALSO HAPPEN TO BELIEVE THAT THIS IS THE EXPERIENCE OF MOST OF US - IF WE ARE HONEST - I KNOW IT HAS BEEN WITH ME...

UNLESS WE ARE THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, WE HAVE TO GO THROUGH A PERIOD OF TIME WHEN WE ARE SAYING "NO" TO GOD - AND MAYBE OTHERS ALSO

TO ME THAT IS AN IMPORTANT THE MESSAGE IN THE GOSPEL STORY TODAY....

DURING THAT TIME OF LEARNING TO SAY "NO" WE HAVE TO BE PATIENT WITH THE OTHER AND PATIENT WITH OURSELVES IF WE ARE LEARNING TO SAY NO - IT'S A VERY MESSY TIME

***BUT THIS GOSPEL STORY IS SO FULL OF HOPE....AND UNDERSTANDING
FOR US***

***IF TAX COLLECTORS AND PROSTITUTES (IN OTHER WORDS - GREAT
SINNERS) CAN ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD - THERE'S GOT TO BE
GREAT HOPE FOR ALL OF US...***

***TAKING THEIR LEAD WE NEED TO BE HONEST AND WILLING TO LEARN
FROM BOTH OUR NO'S AND OUR YES'S - TO GROW, LET GO AND
CHANGE...***

***IN SOME SITUATIONS THAT MAY MEAN SAYING NO APPROPRIATELY AND
IN OTHERS SITUATIONS IT MAY MEAN SAYING NO, BUT EVENTUALLY
REALIZING WE ARE WRONG AND BEING WILLING TO REVERSE
OURSELVES - REPENT, IF YOU WILL, AND SAY YES....***

***IT CERTAINLY MEANS DISCERNING THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION IN
BOTH SITUATIONS***

***BUT WE ALL EVENTUALLY WANT TO BE IN A PLACE WHERE WE CAN
SAY YES AND GO OUT AND WORK IN THE VINEYARD.....***

***AND A FINAL NOTE...REMEMBER JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH'S
HOUSEKEEPER....***

***WHEN JOHN WOKE UP FROM HIS NAP THE FIRST THING PRESIDENT
JOHNSON WANTED TO KNOW WAS THE IDENTITY OF THE WOMAN WHO
TOLD HIM NO. AFTER HE FOUND OUT JOHNSON SAID, "I WANT HER
WORKING FOR ME"***

***LEARNING HOW TO SAY NO MAY GET US A JOB WITH THE PRESIDENT OF
THE UNITED STATES...***

