**26th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Cycle A, 2014**

Ezechiel 18: 25-28; Phil 2: 1-11; Matthew 21: 28-32

Do you want to become who you truly were made to be? In other words, do you truly want to be happy? Then, do what God tells you to do. God’s plan is always the best plan. Follow his script, his game plan, and his directions for your life.

Jesus has shown us how to do just that. Look at our second reading today from Saint Paul’s letter to the Philippians. Paul tells us that we must have the same attitude as Jesus Christ. What was Jesus’ attitude? **Humility**. Even though he was God, completely humbled himself. He did the will of his Father. His will perfectly cooperated with the will of the Father. The Son and the Father and the Holy Spirit are one God, thus Jesus’ will was one with the will of the Father. Jesus fulfilled the mission he was given. Jesus knew the plan of the Father was the best plan, and Jesus never doubted it, as difficult as it would become to fulfill for his human nature. Jesus’s will and the Father’s will were perfectly united.

Our wills, our lives, also must become one with the will of God the Father. To say our wills -- that is what we choose to do -- are one with God’s will -- that is what God would want us to do -- means our deepest passions in life are to become one with God’s desire for us. To say our will is united to God’s will ultimately means that we become one with the love of God for us.

It is hard for us to understand how provocative today’s Gospel parable was to the religious authorities of Jesus’s time. Prostitutes and tax collectors were the bottom rung of the religious ladder back then, and Jesus was saying that they were entering the Kingdom of God before the religious leaders. Anyone using a similar parable directed at religious leaders of today would provoke the same kind of anger Jesus provoked. Yet, what Jesus spoke two thousand years ago he continues to speak to us, we who are leaders in the Church.

Prostitutes, sinners, the ignorant, children, workers, minorities, criminals, prisoners, drunkards, addicts, unmarried mothers and fathers, the illiterate, the sick, yes perhaps even heretics and atheists, indeed all those on the margins of society and Church, all those on the peripheries, those not a part of religious circles – all these people are, ***not always but often***, entering the Kingdom of God before us who live all day in the Church and are a part of the Church’s inner circle.

Those we consider transgressors of the Law and those we condemn ***may be*** the ones who in the final analysis end up obeying God’s will most fully.

Before any of us presume to go out to those on the fringes, on the peripheries, to all those people I just mentioned, in order to correct them or criticize them or teach them, ***we need to be very humble like*** ***Jesus was humble***. We have to take on the attitude of Christ. We need, as Saint Paul said in the second reading, to take on the attitude of Jesus who emptied himself and became completely like us in all things but sin. This means we must not build walls that separate us. We must become like them in every way, except their sin.

Before we presume to correct someone else who seems disobedient and far from God and the Church, we must recognize how we are so very much like him. We must understand and know him, get close to him, approach him, accept him without accepting his sin or becoming sinful ourselves. We must not build walls, but approach. This is what Jesus did.

So we have the question before us: Are we willing to do this with the prostitutes and tax collectors of our time?

We must, as Pope Francis says, take on the smell of the sheep if we wish to lead the sheep and have them listen and trust us. God has a passion, a deep love for the wayward sinner. He has a heart for the man or woman on the fringes. He desires to be reunited with the one who is lost and confused. He wants us to go out to them, in all humility, like them in everything but sin.

God wants us to do what he sent his Son Jesus to do. He wants our lives to be united to the life of his Son, Jesus Christ.

Accomplishing God’s will, responding to his plan for us is what is important***. Please don’t second guess God’s plan for your life!*** The second son in the Gospel today did that. He first agreed to God’s plan but then thought later his plan was better and he didn’t’ go. The first son at first thought his plan was the better one, but then realized that God’s will was the best plan of his life.

Don’t try to outdo God in planning your life. Unite your will to his. Choose what he wants for you.

God’s plan is the best plan you will ever receive.