

I will Go

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost) is Matthew 21:23-27. This text has two narratives: The Authority of Jesus' Challenged and The Parable of the Two Sons.

This week's Gospel takes place on the Tuesday following Palm Sunday. After receiving the messianic praises of the crowd in his triumphal entry, Jesus had overturned the tables of the money changers and driven out those buying and selling in the temple (Mt 21:12). These things prompted the chief priests and elders to question Jesus' authority. The builders (chief priests) are rejecting the stone that is nevertheless the cornerstone (Mt 21:42). As a result of his teaching and actions done with authority, the chief priests and Pharisees will seek to arrest the Lord (Mt 21:46).

One might even suggest that, from the point of view of Matthew's telling of the narrative, when Jesus is able to reach back all the way to the ministry of John and indict his opponents on the basis of their obduracy, this underscores the enormity and consistency of their opposition to the reign of God that was announced and enacted by John in his own role and manifested in power and mercy by Jesus, God's Son.

In Matthew's Gospel, authority flows from the power of Jesus' Word: the Lord Jesus taught the people "as one who had authority, and not as their scribes" (Mt 7:29). Authority is particularly wielded by means of the Word (Mt 8:9). That Word of Jesus has authority to forgive sins (Mt 9:6). But this authority that comes from Jesus has also been given "to men" (Mt 9:8). Jesus gave the Twelve authority both to heal and to cast out demons in his name (Mt 10:1). In the final words of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel, he announces that "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (28:18), immediately before instituting the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and the Office of the Ministry, with the promise that he would be with his disciples to the culmination of the eon (28:19-20). Thus the Word of Jesus, the forgiveness of sins, Baptism, and the presence of Jesus all stem from this authority that Jesus has and gives.

When His opponents challenge the source of His authority, Jesus exhibits a wisdom that powerfully attests to His status as one sent by God.

Jesus turned the tables, however, with a second question that introduced the parable of the Two Sons. The two sons in the parable are approached by their father in closely parallel fashion. Each responds, of course, in a different way.

The son answered that he wouldn't work. He clearly sinned in disobeying the will of his father. However, the son later repented and did what his father asked. Clearly, this is the son God wants us to emulate.

Prayer: "Chief of sinners though I be, Jesus shed His blood for me, Died that I might live on high, Lives that I might never die. As the branch is to the vine, I am His, and He is mine." Amen. (*LSB* 611:1) (TLSB)