

Some very common expressions that are often used in our everyday language always make me a little bit nervous.

Expressions like, "it'll only take a minute", "we have to talk," or "no problem, I'll take care of everything."

Say what you mean, and mean what you say. That's always good advice — but for many of us — it's advice we may find very hard to follow.

In this second of three parables found in the 21st chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, we find the authority of Jesus, once again questioned by the chief priests and the elders.

They often questioned his authority — because they were very much afraid of losing their own.

Therefore, in response to their challenge, Jesus tells them the parable of the two sons.

The father makes a very simple request: "go and work in my vineyard."

The second son said, "Yes, certainly, no problem," but he never went to do any work.

The first son, however, said, simply and directly: "No way; thanks, but no thanks; got no time today and I ain't in the mood."

Afterwards he thought to himself, "why not," and off to work he goes.

The meaning of the parable is clear.

The Jewish leaders, those who just a moment ago, questioned the authority of Jesus, in regards to everything he was doing and everything he was saying, are compared to that second son. They are like those who say, "I will obey God," but fail to do so.

While on the other hand, the tax collectors, prostitutes and sinners are compared to the first son; they disobey God, and then after hearing Jesus' call to turn their lives around, repent.

The point that often missed when listening to this parable is failing to notice what Jesus did not say.

Jesus praised neither the first son, nor the second. He sets before us an image of two very imperfect of people, where one is no or less better than the other.

Neither son was the type to bring full and complete joy to his father. Both were unsatisfactory; but the one in the end, who obeyed, although in his own good time, is far better.

The ideal son was Jesus. He accepted his Father's will with obedience.

The point is very simple. Those who have said “no,” can change their minds and do what is pleasing to God.

However, for those who say “yes,” and do not obey God's will— have missed an opportunity for entering the Kingdom!

Today's parable challenges each of us to take a good, long and hard look at our own lives.

How good and holy we are the other 161 hours of the week— is just as important, as how good and holy we are for these 60 minutes.

In this place, we pray for the poor, and yet, how much of our treasure do we share with them?

In this place, we pray for unity, and yet, how much do we sow disunity?

In this place, we pray for mercy, and yet, how uncompassionate are our hearts?

Our God did not only promise salvation, he accomplished it. He sent his only Son, who did not hesitate to empty himself of everything, even to the point of death.

How privileged we are at this Table to celebrate today this great mystery of our faith.