

17th Sunday after Pentecost

Sept. 18, 2023-
Sept. 24, 2023

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 20:1-16

THEME: A Story of Perplexing Generosity

SONG: CW21 582/ CW93 392 - Not Unto Us

VISUAL: Monopoly/ Play Money

OBJECT LESSON

Have volunteer students perform various tasks for you in your church/chapel/classroom. Say that you will pay them for their work. Choose some kids to do something more difficult and other kids to do something more simple. Pay them the same amount of Monopoly money. Ask them how they feel afterwards. Do they think the pay is fair?

BIBLE TRUTH

In Jesus' day, people who owned farms or vineyards would often go to the marketplace to hire people to work for the day. Every few hours the owner would go out again to see if more workers could be found. They would work out a payment arrangement with the workers. Read Matthew 20:1-16.

In this parable, all the workers agreed to receive the same amount of money. Some workers worked all day, and other workers only worked one hour. But each worker received the same amount of money. The ones who worked longer expected to be paid more, and they were upset with the owner because they received the same amount as those who worked less. The owner reminded them that it was his money, and he could do with it whatever he wanted. The lesson Jesus teaches is that everyone who comes to faith receives the same blessing, regardless of how long that person has been a believer.

DISCUSSION AND APPLICATIONS

As Christians, do we ever think that we are better than other Christians? Maybe you were raised by Christian parents. Maybe you were baptized when you were a baby. Maybe you've been coming to church and Sunday school all your life. Maybe you know Bible stories backwards and forwards. Does that make you a better Christian than someone who just came to church for the first time yesterday? Does that make you a better

Christian than someone who was just baptized last week? Does that make you a better Christian than someone who repents and believes a week before they die?

How easy it is for us to fall into the trap of sinful pride. We look at ourselves and all the things we do at church, and we assume we're great Christians. This is the same sinful trap the Pharisees fell into time and time again. The apostle Paul warns us: "If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" (1 Corinthians 10:12) Jesus doesn't want us to fall away from the faith for any reason, let alone because we think we're better Christians than others.

The Holy Spirit leads us to repent when we hear messages like this. Instead of being like the Pharisee in another parable, we should be like the tax collector. We should pray, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Because, in the end, it doesn't matter how long we've been a believer. What matters is the faith itself. Faith in Jesus as the Savior is what saves us. Thanks be to God that he has given us that!

PRAYER

Dear Jesus, forgive us for the times when we are proud of our faith. Forgive us for the times we've looked down on others. Lead us to thank you for the gift of faith, which you freely give to all believers. Help us to always live our faith humbly until we receive the blessing of heaven. In your name we pray. Amen.



HEART IMPRINTS

18th Sunday after Pentecost

Sept. 25, 2023 -
October 1, 2023

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 21:28-32

THEME: A Story of Spiritual Insincerity

SONG: CW21 793 - Jesus, Tender Shepherd, Hear Me

VISUAL: road signs/pictures of road signs (speed limit, stop, crosswalk, one way, no U turn, etc.)

OBJECT LESSON

Explain that drivers have to follow these signs because they're the law. Police officers help enforce these laws by making sure that people follow them. But what if a police officer did not follow these signs even after telling you that you had to? Is that right?

BIBLE TRUTH

It's happening again! The Pharisees are trying again to trap Jesus while he teaches the people. The Pharisees were always trying to make Jesus say something wrong so they could prove to the people that they shouldn't follow him. But Jesus is true God, so he never said or did anything wrong. Jesus always said and did the right thing, especially when he was teaching others about God's Word.

The Pharisees said they followed God's Word, but their actions didn't support them. They were always correcting the people on what they should do to follow God's Word correctly. But the Pharisees hardly ever truly followed God's Word. They added their own rules to the Bible and tried to make the people follow them. They thought they were better than the people because they knew God's Word. Jesus wanted to teach the Pharisees a lesson about how they were acting, so he told a parable about a man with two sons. Read Matthew 21:28-32.

DISCUSSION AND APPLICATIONS

Sometimes it's easy for us to say the right thing. Words are easy. When our mom or dad or our teacher asks us to do something, it's easy to tell them we'll do it. It's easy to say, "Yes, of course I'll help you." But then our sinful nature starts working. We're tempted to not follow through on what we said we would do. And many, many times we don't help our parents or teachers like we said we would.

Other times we sin with our words. Maybe your mom asks you to take out the garbage, and you tell her no. You refuse to help. That's a sin. But then the Holy Spirit starts working in your heart. You remember that God told you to obey your parents. That's what the Fourth Commandment says. When we obey our parents, we're really obeying God. When you told your mom that you wouldn't help, you were really telling God that you wouldn't help. Then the Holy Spirit uses God's Word to lead you to repent of your sin. You go back to your mom and you apologize for not listening to her, and then you take out the garbage like she asked you to.

We don't always use our words and actions in the right way. But Jesus did! Jesus always said and did the right thing because he is the holy Son of God. He lived a perfect life and obeyed God's commandments because he knew we couldn't. He died on the cross to take away all the times we said or did the wrong thing. And he is with us every day to help us honor him by honoring our parents.

PRAYER

Dear Jesus, forgive us for the times when we've said or done something we shouldn't have. Lead us to repent of our sins when we fall into them. Help us always to trust in you for forgiveness, which you won for us by your perfect life and death in our place. In your name we pray. Amen.



HEART IMPRINTS

19th Sunday after Pentecost

Oct. 2, 2023 -
Oct. 8, 2023

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 21:33-43

THEME: A Story of Reckless Patience

SONG: CW21 862/ CW93 203 - Lord, Keep Us Steadfast In Your Word

VISUAL: Student volunteers to help act out the parable

OBJECT LESSON

Since this is a visual parable, choose some students beforehand to pantomime the parable as you read it. Keep them in front of the group as you explain what each part of the parable means.

BIBLE TRUTH

Jesus keeps teaching in parables. He uses the picture to show that, even though God had done everything for his people, many of them kept rejecting him. Even the prophets and other leaders, who should have known better, kept rejecting God's promises, even rejecting Jesus. But God kept showing patience. Read Matthew 21:33-43

DISCUSSION AND APPLICATIONS

In today's parable, each important person or object represents something:

- **Landowner:** God the Father
- **Vineyard:** God's kingdom of believers
- **Fruit:** Following God's commands
- **Wicked Tenants:** Israelites
- **Servants:** Old Testament prophets
- **Landowner's Son:** Jesus
- **New Tenants:** Believers in Jesus

Remember how easy it was for the Pharisees to see how wicked the tenants in the parable were? It may be easy for us too to notice how bad someone else is behaving. But how often do we look at our own behavior? How often do we really notice our own sins?

God knows what is in our hearts. But look back at the parable. Did the landowner kill the wicked tenants after they mistreated the first servant he sent to them? No! The landowner kept trying again and again to get the tenants to do the right thing. God does the same thing with us. God is incredibly patient with us, no matter how

many times we sin. God keeps coming to us in his Word, wanting us to repent and turn to him for forgiveness. That forgiveness is already ours because we believe in Jesus! Jesus died on the cross for all the times when we didn't realize how sinful we were. And even now, when we continue sinning every day, God is still patient with us. God calls himself "the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin" (Exodus 34:6-7). No matter how many times we sin, God is there with his loving forgiveness.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, we don't always see our own sinfulness. We are quick to point out the sins of others while ignoring our own sins. Forgive us for the times we have been unrepentant. Lead us to always turn to you, who always hears us and forgives us. Thank you for your loving patience toward us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



HEART IMPRINTS

20th Sunday after Pentecost

Oct. 9, 2023–
Oct. 15, 2023

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 22:1-14

THEME: A Story of Insane Rejection

SONG: CW21 573/ CW93 376 - Jesus, Your Blood and Righteousness

VISUAL: special invitations (VIP backstage, tropical vacation, Super Bowl, White House, etc.)

OBJECT LESSON

Discuss what it would feel like to get an invitation to one of these places. An all-expenses-paid trip to Hawaii?! Meeting Taylor Swift backstage?! Sitting in the owner's box at the Super Bowl?! Dinner with the president at the White House?! Would any of you turn down an invitation like that?

BIBLE TRUTH

It's parable time again! Jesus again wants to teach a lesson about heaven, so he uses a story we should be familiar with. A king was throwing a big party for his son, so he invited a bunch of people to come. What happened when they were told everything was ready? Read Matthew 22:1-14.

DISCUSSION AND APPLICATIONS

After hearing this parable, we might be asking ourselves, "Why wouldn't these people want to come to this party? A king's party sounds like it would be pretty amazing! Who would reject something like that?"

Let's review what each part of this parable represents. The king is God the Father; the son is Jesus; the party is heaven; God sends out his invitation far and wide. But unfortunately people come up with excuses not to attend. And some who try to get in don't have the right clothes. They're trying to get into heaven by some way other than Jesus. So if the party really represents heaven, we still might ask ourselves, "Why would people not want to go to heaven? Who would reject something like that?"

Sin can make people do pretty insane things. We need to remind ourselves how strong our sinful desires are. Our sinful nature wants absolutely nothing to do with God. Our sinful nature *hates* God. Our sinful nature invents its own way to get to heaven. In other words, our sinful nature would continually reject our heavenly Father's invitation to his heavenly banquet.

But God in his mercy doesn't reject us. He keeps sending his invitation out. He seeks us in his Word. He brings us to faith in the only way to heaven: Jesus. His blood washes away our sins. His righteousness covers us. By God's grace for us, he overcomes our insane rejection and gives us the gift of faith in Jesus. By his grace, we are among the few who are chosen.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, our sinful nature is strong, but your love is stronger. Please be with us during times of temptation and sin. Help us always turn to you for help in overcoming our sinful desires. Keep us close to you as we live in this sinful world until we are safe at home in heaven with you forever. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



HEART IMPRINTS

21st Sunday after Pentecost

Oct. 16, 2023 -
Oct. 22, 2023

SCRIPTURE: Romans 13:1-7

THEME: Godly Government

SONG: CW21 774/ CW93 619 - God Bless our Native Land

VISUAL: pictures of current government leaders (mayor, governor, Senators/ reps, president)

OBJECT LESSON

Show pictures of current leaders in government. Ask if the kids recognize any of them. Ask them to explain what they do for us. (Hopefully they won't bring some of their parents' political takes into chapel with them!)

BIBLE TRUTH

The Fourth Commandment tells us to show honor and respect for our parents. Martin Luther, when he explained the Fourth Commandment in the catechism, said that we should also show honor and respect for anyone who is in authority over us. The apostle Paul teaches this to us in our reading for today. Read Romans 13:1-7.

DISCUSSION AND APPLICATIONS

As Christians, we know this is what the Bible says. We know that God put government in authority over us. Jesus himself even recognized the authority of the government when he encouraged people to keep paying their taxes. So then why is it so hard for us to show respect and honor for the government?

In our country, we have elections where we can vote for the candidate that we feel would best represent us in the government. Some people vote for one candidate, and other people vote for another candidate. Both candidates want to serve in government, but they may have different ideas of how to best do that. We might find it easier to show respect for the government if the person we voted for wins the election. If the other person wins, our sinful nature would want us to show disrespect for them simply because we didn't vote for them. Is that how God wants us to behave?

The Bible reminds us that there is "no government except that which God has established." Even if we don't agree with the person that got elected, their authority is still given to them by God. We show respect for God by showing respect for the government he has put in place. Even if the government does things that go against God's Word, their authority still comes from God. And we should always show respect for that authority.

The apostle Paul lived during the Roman Empire. Their leaders in government did not like Christians, and often had Christians arrested or killed. Martin Luther encouraged people to respect those in government even during the times when the government was out to kill him too. Paul and Luther understood what the Bible says. God has given us governing leaders for our protection, and he can use them to bring blessings to his people. In our country, the whole reason we are free to sit here in school and learn about Jesus is because of the special laws the government has put into place. We are free to teach about Jesus because we have the freedom to practice our religion. God has certainly blessed us here in the United States!

PRAYER

Dear Lord, forgive us for the times when we have not shown proper respect to those in our government. Help us to always remember that you have given us the government to bless us and protect us. Lead us to honor and respect our leaders, for that is how we can also honor and respect you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



HEART IMPRINTS