

BIBLE STUDY
September 25 and 28, 2023

THE TWENTY SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Ezekiel 18: 25-28

Matthew 21: 28-32

Philippians 2: 1-11

1. Ezekiel 18: 25-28

- This chapter in Ezekiel rejects a traditional belief that punishment for sin is handed down from one generation to the next. Here the prophet emphasizes personal responsibility and accountability.
- In vv. 1-20, Ezekiel affirms that a father who does what is just will receive his reward. If he has a son who does wrong, it is the son who bears the responsibility and not the father. Likewise, a son who does not follow the evil ways of his father will be rewarded. However, the father will be punished for his sins.
- Vv. 21-24: If an evil person turns away from the wrong, he has done and embraces the right way, then his/her sins will be forgiven. If a person who does right turns away from the right path and walks in evil ways, the good he has done will be forgotten and he will bear responsibility for the wrong he has done.
- V. 25: The prophet anticipates the reaction of the people who say that this is not fair. God answers and says that it is their ways that are not fair.
- V. 26: A person must persevere until the end in doing what is right. If they turn from what is right and persist in doing wrong with no desire for forgiveness or change, then the good they have done will be forgotten.
- V. 27: Authentic conversion is what counts. The one who truly repents of his/her wrongdoing, makes amends, and does what is right, will be forgiven.
- V. 28: A good person must persevere in doing good.

2. Matthew 21: 28-32

- In this section (21:28-22:14) Jesus tells three parables that make clear that those who did not accept Jesus—no matter what their religious status is—will not enter the Kingdom of God, but those who accept Jesus—regardless of their former way of life—will be saved.
- V. 28-31: Jesus poses a question. There are two sons, one says yes, but does not go, the other says no, but then goes. Who did the father's will? Of course, it is the one who in the end did what was asked of him. Jesus applies this example to the religious leaders of the day. He says that the tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the Kingdom of God before you.
- V. 32: The leaders saw the response of the tax collectors and prostitutes but did not follow their example. John the Baptist came doing what was right, but the leaders rejected him. However, tax collectors and sinners saw the truth he preached and changed their lives in response. The religious leaders are like the son who says yes but does not go. The tax

collectors and prostitutes, in a sense, have said no by their lifestyle, but are converted and change their lives. They put their faith into action.

- The parable sets a scene of the Last Judgement, we will be judged not only by our words, but more importantly by our actions.
- Implicit in the parable is the teaching that we must persevere until the end doing what is right. Faithfulness to the end will guarantee our salvation.

3. Philippians 2: 1-11

- Vv. 1-5 Paul appeals to the people of the church of Philippi to strive for unity and humility among themselves. They are to be of one mind, and to defer to one another, not thinking that one is better than the other. They are to have the same mind that Christ did when he was obedient to his Father and humbly accepted His will for him.
- VV. 6-11 is probably an ancient Christian hymn that predated Paul and was used in early worship services. The words would be familiar to the Philippians.
- V. 6: Although he was the Son of God and existed from eternity with the Father, Jesus did not insist on retaining his position of equality with God.
- V. 7: Jesus willingly let go of the appearance of his divinity. He emptied himself for us. The Greek word for emptying out is *kenosis*. He appeared as a human person like you and me. He assumed the form of a slave—obedient to the will of the Father.
- V. 8: Jesus had no pretense, no false airs, no superficial exterior. He was authentic. That is true humility to have your feet firmly planted on the ground. He completed the mission given him by God the Father to die on the cross for us.
- V. 9: Because of his humility and obedience, God the Father raised him up. He did not leave him in death. He raised him up to new life. He exalted him. He gave him a name that is above all other names.
- V. 10: At this exalted name, every knee will bend on earth, below the earth and above the earth.
- All people will acknowledge Jesus as Lord and God will be glorified in this.
- We call this the Pascal Mystery. Jesus suffered and died for us, but God raised him up and exalted him on high. God brings victory out of defeat.