

Scripture for the 17th Sunday after Pentecost, September 27, 2020

Introduction to the Gospel Lesson: Matthew 21:23-32

For some the context for this scripture text will seem strange in the Fall of the church year; this text about Jesus' authority being questioned comes while he visits the temple after going into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. But Palm Sunday is not the relevant part of this text in chapter 21 of Matthew's gospel. The ultimate question before Jesus and the authorities at this time deals with his authority, a question we all deal with still to this day. Let's listen in on how Jesus handles this question. A text from Matthew 21:23-32

A Reading from Matthew 21:23-32 The Authority of Jesus Questioned

²³ When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" ²⁴ Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵ Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' ²⁶ But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet." ²⁷ So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

The Parable of the Two Sons

²⁸ "What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' ²⁹ He answered, 'I will not'; but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰ The father^[a] went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir'; but he did not go. ³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³² For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.