

**“Tell Me the Stories of Jesus;
Parables that Challenge, Convict and Comfort”
“Who goes first?”**

As we continue in our sermon series “Tell Me the Stories of Jesus; Parables that Challenge, Convict and Comfort,” this week we are back in the gospel of Matthew. This story comes toward the end of the gospel. Jesus has entered Jerusalem on what we call “Palm Sunday.” The stage is set and he moves to “cleaning out the temple and his authority is in question. After these events, Jesus tells this story. It once again begins with, “a man had two sons.” This focus is on behavior and action. For those involved in the educational system this week students go back to school. Who is first is often a question and why does it matter? May this week bring new insights to each one of us as we re-discover how we behave and act as we are challenged by this story of Jesus. ----Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Who goes first?”**

Prayer for the Week

Holy Friend, you ask us to match our deeds with our words, yet our ability to do so appears to be sadly limited. Please send your Holy Spirit into our mind and spirits, that in the deep complexities of our being, there may rise up from within a greater ability to serve you as you deserve, and to fill all our living with your love. Through Christ Jesus our Savior. Amen. (B.D. Prewer)

This week’s sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

Study Guide

Monday, 8/21/17 Matthew 21: 23-27

This was not read Sunday, but it is an important set up for the story Jesus will tell in the next verses. He has come into Jerusalem and it is just days before he will be arrested and crucified. The religious authorities are pressing him on what he was teaching and preaching. When pressed on the question of authority, the religious leaders backed down. This profound encounter leads into Jesus' next parable about words and actions. Have you ever felt caught, either by questions that others ask or by the push back from others?

Tuesday, 8/22 /17 Matthew 21: 28-30

"What do you think? A man has two sons...." We have heard that opening line before. This time, there is no younger or elder brother. The only information we have are the conversations, the responses and the actions taken. The father asks each son to go and work and one says no and then goes anyway and the other says yes and doesn't follow through. Probably most of us have acted like each of the sons, saying we will do something and then not doing it or saying we won't and then changing our minds and doing what we were asked to do. What two experiences stick in your mind? One where you didn't want to do something and then went ahead and did it? Or a time you said you would do something but didn't? What are your feelings about those two experiences?

Wednesday, 8/23/17 Matthew 21: 31-32

School starts today for the Wichita school district. In this story Jesus is noting that those who actually do something are the ones that enter the kingdom of heaven. "Talk is cheap" and those who "talk the talk" are not as invested in the kingdom of heaven as those who "walk the walk." That may look different for different people, but what does matter is not the past, but how we live in the present and how we behave. Is our yes "yes" or is it just words rather than faith in action? As school begins, students understand that sometimes people just "talk" but don't act. May our words match our actions and make our faith real.

Thursday, 8/24/17 Romans 13: 8-10

The twelfth chapter of Paul's letter to the church at Rome is all about behavior. Paul wants followers of Jesus to offer themselves; mind, body and spirit to the work of the church. In fact, Paul mentions that each person is gifted and we are all different, but that we should love and be a people of prayer and hospitality. In the beginning of this chapter, Paul notes we are all under some sort of authority and we should pray for our government officials. Then, Paul says that we should owe no one, and the only debt we should have as believers is love. We should love each other and love our neighbor. Love is the law. When paired with Jesus' story, we are reminded that how we act and behave matters and it points to what we really believe. How do you live out the law of love?

Friday, 8/25/17 Romans 13: 11-12

Now is the time Paul notes. As school began this, many students, teachers and families understand that now is the time. Summer is over, and now it is back to work and school. "Now" Paul notes, salvation is nearer to us, let us put on garments of light and work out our salvation. How do our actions match what we say? Do we do the work of Christ in everything? Today pray for the church worldwide, that the love and grace of God might be made real in word and deed.