

Sept 30 / Oct 1 2017

Ez 18:25-28; Phil 2:1-11 (or 1-5); Mt 21:28-32

Talk is cheep. Talk is cheep because the words themselves don't accomplished things. We can promise a lot of things - and we may really intend to do them, but it is in the doing that we show who we are. It's the action that gives the talk its value. We sometimes don't feel that we have to hold to good and worthy promises or oaths we have made if a reason can be found to break them, or if the oath becomes inconvenient or uncomfortable. Or else we hold on to an unworthy promise whether it is comfortable or not, and our actions rob it of any possible value. In the Gospel we hear about two sons who both don't do what they say they said they will do - why is one on the right side and the other off base? For both their talk was cheep, but for one his action gave a value that his words alone could not.

A lot of times we think that what we feel to be right, and what God has revealed to be right are on the same level. We as Catholics believe that for thousands of years the Holy Spirit has been guiding the Church to interpret and apply the scriptures, and that that Spirit has led us by events of the world to a greater understanding of the will of God. This will is not always what we want it to be, this will is not always comfortable or convenient. It is certainly not always comfortable or convenient for me to follow the will of God - many times it would be a easier to ignore it and go my own way. We can put what is our own preference - what we think is most sensible to us -as the highest priority. We can think that the teaching of the Church is just another human opinion that can be taken or not if it is comfortable and convenient. But if the search for God's will is rooted too much in our ideas we can loose track of what is our will and the will of God - and we can make promises and take positions based on weak understandings of what is ultimately important. That makes our talk, and the actions that may follow it, cheep.

St. Paul tells us of the attitude that we should have in searching for God's will. He tell us to *have in you the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus*. That attitude he tells us is that of the one who did not hesitate to humble himself to do the will of the Father; the one who knelt in the Garden of Gethsemane and begged for the cup to be taken from him, but in the end committed himself verbally and in action to following the will of the Father - comfortable or not. That's hard for all of us. We can say "yes Lord I will follow" - but talk is cheep. The attitude of Jesus is one that goes beyond the talk to the action, and tries to match both to the will of the Father.

We can change, and should change, the things we have spoken when we find out that they were not based on God's will in the first place. As we heard in the first reading: *But if he turns from the wickedness he has committed, he does what is right and just ... he shall surely live, he shall not die.* When our path we have decided on is not in line with God's will - God tells us we can change it and God will reward that change. There are some types of promises we have made to ourselves, some commitments we have decided on that are based in false information, revenge, anger, greed, impulsiveness, hurt, or pride that we should turn from them despite our words. We should turn from them not because they are uncomfortable or inconvenient (it's usually more comfortable to keep it the way it is) but we should follow the example of Jesus and turn to follow the deeper responsibilities we have that are rooted in God's will and the loving plan of God.

In the Gospel parable Jesus tells us today there are these two sons. One made a promise to the father that he did not follow through with - cheep talk made even cheeper by his actions. The other turned from his prideful and defiant speech and did the Father's will - cheep talk made valuable by turning from pride and selfishness (and whatever else made him defy the Father) to do differently than he spoke. The hardest thing is to know what the will of God is in any situation. The teaching of the Church, and the tradition of scripture interpretation gives us guidance and shows us some boundaries to stay in while trying to figure it out. But discovering God's will has always been tricky. Where do we start? We could start by taking first the teachings of the Church, these are at least about as clear as the Father in the Gospel: *Go out and work in the vineyard today.* The son who responded to the clear directive left to go to the vineyard, but still needed to figure out how to fulfill the directive. He needed to use his understanding of the mind of his father, the needs of the vineyard, the contribution of the other workers, for him to figure out exactly what to do. The same with us. We can follow first the commitments coming from our profession of faith, we can trust God to guide us through the Church and we can study to grow in understanding of the mind of the Father. This deeper understanding helps us to know how to carry out what God commands. With this understanding, our promises to God are given value not by their words, but by our actions in following God's will in our life. This way our talk - which by itself is cheep - becomes fulfilled by a life that pleases God, and fits into the loving plan of God to bring all people to salvation in Jesus Christ.