

As I live on my own I often have interesting discussions with myself. Sometimes I involve the dog and cat but, usually, I am the only audience. These discussions can be very mundane but are, generally, said out loud; “Is it the day to put out the bins? “Where did I put the dustpan and brush? I had them in my hands a minute ago. What shall I have for lunch?” Others are more pressing, “Where are my car keys? “I can’t find my car keys. I should have left 5 minutes ago, so where are they? Oh, they’re in my bag already!” I rather hope that this is familiar to some of you at least.

Generally, though, I like to think of my ponderings as pauses for thought. I will have read something or heard it on the radio or TV and it sticks in my mind. This is often the case when I have heard something which intrigues me and I need a proper think.

Today’s gospel reading is one such story. Jesus tells the Parable of the Two Sons.

Jesus is at the Temple, speaking in the Temple courts to followers who had been joined by the chief priests and the elders. He is asked by what authority he is preaching; a question he refuses to answer but, instead, tells this parable, the parable of the two sons.

One son is asked by his father to go and work in the vineyard. His reply is short, “I will not.” You can imagine him stomping off, muttering under his breath.” But he then changes his mind and goes off to work. The father then approaches his second son with the same request and this son says, “I will, sir.” The difference is that this son does not do as he has said and doesn’t go. He ignores his father’s request.

The question Jesus posed to his followers was simple, “Which son did what his father wanted?”

Obviously, the first.

Jesus was using the parable to illustrate the problem that John the Baptist had when he was preparing the way for Jesus. John had opponents, particularly from those in authority and they killed him. Here, in the temple courts, Jesus is speaking to an audience that contained the chief priests and the elders of the people. He is giving them the opportunity to rethink their attitude to John by responding positively to his message. Jesus asks them a question, “John’s baptism, where did it come from? Was it from heaven or men?”

After discussion amongst themselves they answered, “We don’t know.”

Jesus wanted people to think about the relationship between John and himself; to think about John’s ministry and his own. He was giving them an opportunity to respond positively to his words and to find their way into the kingdom of God.

At the end of the account we read of at least two members of the Sanhedrin who changed their minds and gave Jesus’ body an honourable burial in accordance with Jewish burial customs: Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and brought with him a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds.

We have been asked to ponder a question each week and I leave you with one of mine.

*Do you meet situations where changing your mind would be a sign not of weakness but of wisdom?*

Gill Barrett