

Make A Change

Matthew 21:28–32 “What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind and went. And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. 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 when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

The Struggle to Change: As a preacher, you hopefully regularly ask, “What does this congregation need?” You realize that you have no power to make changes in others lives. Ultimately, God’s word (whether it’s being taught or practiced) is the power that brings change. As Paul said, some plant, some water, but God gives the increase. The Hebrew writer discussed the power behind the word, calling it “living and active.” However, that truth never keeps me from my attempt to encourage change in you. I (hopefully) will play a part in your life, just as you do mine, and we all do others’. Level with me for a second. When is the last time a sermon (of anyone’s), podcast, spiritual material or God’s word has resulted in an actual change in behavior or decisions in your life? Why do we struggle with change? The reality is we all continue to change. We’re either changing into the image of His Son, or conforming to the world. So again, why do we struggle?

A. We tend to focus on others.

- Begins with a challenge from the chief priests and elders (probably members of Sanhedrin).
- They needed to look at **themselves** before criticizing Jesus, don’t you agree?
 - For our consideration: How do others see you? What do you bring to the table?
 - I’m sure they felt they brought much to the table. In many ways they did (**Matthew 23:2-3**).
 - When’s the last time you’ve looked into the mirror? What do you see? **James 1:22-25**
 - Let’s consider part of the word and think about the context: **Romans 12:1-4**.
 - This is a pivotal point in Paul’s letter. It turns inward. It asks others to take inventory.
 - We allow ourselves to go into “auto pilot” when it comes to faith.
 - Notice how it turns to gifts of grace. What kingdom benefits from your gifts?

B. We don’t like what we see in ourselves.

- What obstacles did Jesus face? Why couldn’t He penetrate their hearts?
 - Jesus claimed He was equal to God - **John 8:59**
 - Jesus called out their hypocrisy - **John 7:24** (*They were also lovers of money - Luke 16:14*)
 - Jesus called others to Him, not them - **John 11:48; 12:11**
 - **John 12:42–43** “Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in Him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.”
 - See, they didn’t have to change. They could remain as they were and still reap the benefits. They could still have money. They could continue as teachers. No one would challenge them like Jesus. Everyone else would give them glory.
 - What about us? What do we keep if we don’t change?
 - **Deuteronomy 8:7-20**. This chapter (like chapter 6) speaks about life for the Israelites once they took ownership of the “Promised Land.” What was meant as a blessing, unfortunately, turned into a curse. As time went on, the nation slowly forgot what God had done, took it for granted, and no longer felt the need for God. After all - look at what they

had accomplished? Look at the homes and vineyards? Of course, they forgot how homes were already built when they arrived. Fruit trees and plants were ready for reaping. However, they didn't lack energy and drive to build and expand.

- We can relate in a sense. This is a common story. People migrate. They move. They conquer. They build. They expand. They change. They don't have an issue with the change, because even though it requires time, energy and money . . . it pays off. Think about the history of the U.S. Think about the tenacious spirit so many had. Look at where we're at now?
- We're typically not a lazy people. We'll give attention to things that interest or benefit us. It's not that we don't use our talents - we just focus them on the wrong kingdom. We put energy into the wrong kingdom. We talk about events relating to the wrong kingdom. We are growing in the wrong kingdom.

Our problem is that we've made it to the Promised Land too soon. The problem is, that when you make it the Promise Land, you get to rest. Brethren, we've not entered the rest yet. It still remains. And while it remains, there's work to be done.

So, this was meant to serve as a reminder. A "check-in", if you will. Is there an area that needs attention? Listen, if we're like most congregations, then we'll have those who struggle. We'll have a young adult or two who hasn't got serious about their life with the Lord yet. We'll have a husband who is leading. A wife who isn't submitting. Parents who are turning a blind eye. An individual or two who are bored with the Lord, so they'll turn to the world. We'll have those who won't study. We'll have those who use their talents for themselves or the wrong kingdom.

- Marriage
- Parenting
- Morality
- Study
- Service

Will you make the change?