

26th SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME—CYCLE A
Christ the King • Commitment Weekend • September 27-28, 2008

“What do you think?” is how our Lord began the parable in today’s gospel reading. I wonder from time to time, what do you think? What do I think? This parable is a simple story about a man who had two sons. One morning, probably quite early, the father asked one of his sons to go work in the family vineyard. The boy responded to his father’s request with a defiant “I will not.” But later in the day, he reconsidered his father’s request and went to work.

Later – how much later, we don’t know – the father, no doubt discouraged if not disappointed, asked his second son to go work in the vineyard. He said, “I will, sir,” but then didn’t. His quick “Yes” soon became a defiant “No.” Jesus then asked those standing around, “Which of the two did the will of his father?” That was an easy question. “The first one,” they answered. And they were right. End of story.

Or is it. What do you think? Our Lord then turned to the crowd and told them, much to their embarrassment, “tax collectors and prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you.” Why? Because those who were quick with their answer to Jesus’ easy question about the two sons were slow in their doing of God’s work. They were eager to tell Jesus – and anybody else who would ask— what they thought. But they cared little, or seemed to, for those for whom nobody cared.

I wonder. Where are you, where am I, in this parable? Here is a picture filled with all our faces, colored by all our choices. Here is where we find ourselves today, having said “Yes” and doing “No;” speaking our “No” and choosing “Yes.” Here is the place where God can work in our lives.

So here we are, “Yes” and “No” people before the God in whose image we are made. If we listen, we will hear the invitation of the Father who never accepts the fact that “No” is our final answer. In the most negative, cynical moment of your life, God believes you have a “Yes” that longs not only to be said, but to be lived. So, no matter what may have been your “No,” live it into “Yes” and in so doing, become God’s gift to yourself and others.