

“Lead us in your truth, O Lord, and teach.  
For you are the God of salvation and  
for you we wait all day long.” AMEN!

(Sing “Lead me, Guide me” ELW 768)

Lead us, O Lord. Lead us through the changes  
you’d have us make.

Have you ever sat down and thought about  
how many times you have changed you mind?

If someone ever tells you that they  
have never changed their mind,  
they are either perfect or stupid.

Seriously!

I don’t use the words without reason.

If you’re “perfect” (somehow!) then  
you’ve never needed to changed your mind or

You’re just plain dumb because you’re going  
to live with the consequences of wrong  
decisions no matter how miserable  
they make you, and me.

Somehow, we have come to believe  
that changing your mind is  
a sign of weakness, when the truth is  
that sometimes changing your mind is  
an act of courage. (Pause)

We find in our gospel this morning  
a parable about changing minds.

Well, it's more a parable about  
two sons and their father.

He is the vineyard owner.

If you're being thoughtful and remember  
last week's lesson your ear may perk up  
a little with that label "vineyard owner."

Last week, we read the parable about  
the vineyard landowner who went out five times  
to hire workers.

The landowner went to hire workers  
that were outsiders, you might say, but now  
we have a landowner (and father)  
calling on the family to go out and work.

That's a notable distinction to be mindful of.

Why is it important?

It is important because Jesus, in chapter 21,  
is in Jerusalem inside the temple.

The setting has changed.

He is now in the midst of the temple authorities and  
the temple system.

The leaders of the religious power base  
went to Jesus and questioned him:

By what authority are you doing these things, and  
who gave you this authority?

Sure, they had their minds set and  
they'd likely heard Jesus teach with power  
and authority so now they want to know  
from where (and from whom)  
did it come. (Pause)

Sometimes I imagine myself as  
one of those Pharisees or scribes  
that questioned Jesus.

We pastors have a tendency  
to get set in our ways, too.

Sometimes we aren't very open  
to changing our minds, either.

So Jesus told them this rather simple parable.

Simple to understand, that is.

It's not so simple to emulate.

Two sons and a father,  
the father was the owner of a vineyard and  
the kids had jobs to do in those fields.

These insiders would know that  
when religious teachers talked about  
vineyards in their parables then they  
were speaking metaphorically  
about the kingdom of God.

And this was the main purpose of  
the temple authorities.

To usher in the kingdom of God  
by preparing their flocks (or people) for  
the coming of the Messiah.

So, while it might be obvious that  
the chief priests and scribes were being  
identified with the son who said,

“Yes, father! I’ll go work but  
then changed their mind.”

We would do well in a little self-identification  
with that son, too.

For we become comfortable in saying  
the right things or believing what we are  
supposed to believe and then  
never doing anything about it.

You see, most Christians, including me,  
get stuck in the head knowledge of belief.

We get stuck in saying the right words,  
acting the right way,  
playing an actor’s role while Jesus

revealed his expectation that belief is  
really about doing things and behaving in  
ways of obedience to the Cross of Christ.

(Pause)

The other son who answered the request of  
the father to go into the vineyard negatively,

later changed his mind and he went into  
the vineyard to work as the father ordered.

That had to take courage because  
he reflected on his decision later and  
then came to the conclusion  
that he was wrong.

And he changed his mind  
to follow his father's order.

Some might have an issue  
with the word, "ordered," but how else can  
one be obedient unless  
they are following orders?

The gospel news here, then is  
that there's time to change  
your minds and believe. (Pause)

Don't change them for me,  
do not even change your minds for yourself,  
but do it for the sake of others. (Hmm)

You see, this is indeed the vision  
written about in Ezekiel.

The reception of new hearts and new spirits  
will come as our expectations of God  
are overturned or flipped upside down.

When we ask ourselves the question,  
“What does it mean to wrestle with a God  
who loves you this much?”

It means that little by little, bit by bit,  
a new society springs forth and new hearts  
and new spirits come into view.

Not only for ourselves but for everyone.

And here’s the litmus test to know if  
the Lord is leading and guiding you  
to change your mind.

Ask yourself does this action, decision,  
thought, conversation lead to life or  
does it lead to something else?

Not only life for you, but  
life for everyone.

If the answer is “yes” then you’ll know  
if you need to change your mind or not.

In a couple weeks, we will gather together  
on our journey of open forum and  
discernment about this congregation.

It will be easy to say the words, “The Lord is with us.”

Saying them and acting on them  
are two separate things.

But do we really believe it enough to act that way?

“If we look,” like Paul wrote in the letter to  
the Philippians,

“if we look not on our own interests,  
but to the interests of others,” then  
we are close to the kingdom of God.

Close enough to touch it, to taste it.

Lead us O Lord.

If we look upon the interests of others  
we are on our way to the cruciform life.

That is a life that is cross-shaped.

A life lived in obedient values received  
from the crucified Jesus.

This is the transformation of the  
mind that Jesus spoke about.

Now how is that change, or



transformation, of mind  
embodied in our behavior?

AMEN!