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Pastoral Notes

Reverend Dr. Brigitte A. Black

Ministry of Encouragement

The Great Pretenders

Matthew 21:28-32

Admitting faults, shortcomings, mistakes, and sin is hard for many people. To look at yourself and see where you fell short can be extremely hard for others. Many of us would like to think we have it all together but we are hanging on by a thread. It's hard being a Christian. Many have not learned that "NO" is a complete sentence. You do not have to offer an excuse or reason why. You know your schedule and if what someone is asking you to do does not fit, better to say no, then to say yes and do not do it. It is difficult to pick up the pieces at the last minute and get it done properly. If you tell someone up front that you cannot do it they can make other plans.

In our text, Jesus is illustrating that the people did not repent and believe John the Baptist; they kept doing business as usual. They did not assess themselves and confess their sins, faults, and shortcomings. They continued to play the shame and blame game. They were not willing to accept their part in their messes. Nobody can make you. Folks will provoke you but you must take the high road. We all will stand before the judgment seat and will have to answer for our own actions. Does not matter what they said or did. It does matter what you say and do. Jesus says, tax collectors and prostitutes will make it in the kingdom before the church folks. We church folks have a holier than thou attitude and think more highly of ourselves than we ought.

Some of us may have turned to Jesus before we got caught up. There are no big and little sins. Many of us cannot help but rank sins. Then our stuff does not look as bad. Well, in God eyes it was all bad and when you repented, you were forgiven. Pray for others to repent and turn to Jesus, and tell others about what Jesus has done in your life. We are called to be disciples of Jesus Christ and not just church members and pew warmers. When Jesus forgave us all our sins were forgiven. Just as we have been forgiven we are to forgive others and not judge them. God loves us all and wants to save everyone.

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Prayer

God of all creation, we are in awe of Your creation. You who have made the seasons that change according to Your plan and bring us an array of colors, temperatures, and precipitation, we thank You. We exalt and extol You. Your name is above all names. We admire Your handiwork and welcome the Fall colors. Your power and might can change to entire world with a wave of Your hand, or the clap of Your hands, or the words of Your mouth. Speak calm to the wind and waves.

It is Your desire to give us a new heart that causes us to be more loving, caring, kind, and compassionate towards each other. Grant us the boldness and zeal to desire what You desire. May we know that for You to give new hearts, we must introduce the world to You. May we accomplish Your will one relationship at a time. Open our eyes and ears that we may see the opportunities to help each other in love. Strength our resolve to be fruitful, to be ambassadors of peace and justice, and obedient to Your Word.

God of grace and mercy we have sinned and fallen short. Forgive us for not being obedient when You told us to go, to say, and to do. You have said that you require that we love justice, do mercy, and walk humbly with You. May we serve You with an attitude of gratitude and humility. Bless us to operate as instruments of peace and love in whatever circumstances. Help us to speak peace and love to the devastating situations of life. You are a builder and rebuilder. You can create out of nothing. Help us to see blight, destruction, burnout buildings and abandoned houses as opportunities to rebuild and create community. Grant us wisdom to turn tragedy to triumph. Thank you for hearing and answering our prayers. This I pray in the name and power of Jesus Christ our Lord and savior. Amen!

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Stewardship Moment

⁶ Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷ Each person should give what they have decided in their heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 NIV

A cheerful giver sows' seeds for an eternal harvest. They are not looking for an immediate return on their investment. Yes, at some point they will see or hear about the fruit of the labor or they will go to heaven before they experience the harvest. Either way, they have joyfully given to make this world a better place. A cheerful giver does not wait until there is a financial crisis to give their best. They always give their best so there is no financial crisis. We have so much to give that is beyond financial giving. Yes, the church needs money to transact business. Yet, the church needs transformed souls to change the world with their giving.

However, the real business of the church is saving souls, leading people to Christ, being a learner, follower, and doer of Jesus Christ. Not only are we to learn the Word of God we are to act like Jesus and think like Jesus. There are times when our first inclination is far away from what Jesus would say or do. The more we let the Word of God have priority in our life the

quicker we will respond to adversity in a way pleasing to God. It can be very difficult when someone tap dances on your last nerve. Giving is fundamental to who we are as Christians. We give out of gratitude for what God has done in our lives. God, turned you around for the better, placed your feet on solid ground, healed your mind and body, gave you a positive outlook on life (hope) and now you want that for others so you give.

In Acts chapter three, Peter and John were going up to the temple to pray, when a crippled man asked for money. Peter looked at the man and basically said, silver and gold I do not have but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk. What do we give? ***When a person is hopeless and without the faith to believe for a better world, you give them the truth – the reason for your hope.*** You give the gift of ***helps and service*** by caring for the needs of others. You give the gift of ***encouragement*** when a person is ready to give up. You give the gift of ***prayer*** by praying God's blessings and benefits on others. One of the greatest gifts is to ***intercede in prayer*** for someone else. We give the gift of ***unconditional, selfless, and sacrificial love*** to others. ***We shall love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind. That is the first and great commandment and the second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself. That sums up the law and the prophets.*** Our stewardship is a matter of giving the right things, at the right time for the right reason.

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Sermon Scripture

Matthew 21:28-32

The Parable of the Two Sons

²⁸ "What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.' ²⁹ "'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰ "Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go. ³¹ "Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered. Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³² For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.