

# Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 28, 2008

Ex. 18: 25 – 28; Phil. 2: 1 – 11; Mr. 21: 28 – 32

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## Put on the Mind of Christ

Often the hymn in Paul's letter to the Philippians that is used as today's second reading is quoted omitting the preceding verse: "Have in you the same attitude that is also in Christ." Without this opening statement, the hymn is a wondrous acknowledgement of the lavishness of Christ's love for us. With the opening statement, the hymn is not only that, but it is also a call to us to give our lives in a similar self-donation.

The centerpiece of our Liturgy of the Word this morning helps us to better understand both the first reading and the Gospel. The hymn shows us the completeness of Christ's "yes" to the Father, a "yes" focused on sheer abandonment to his call. In becoming one with us, he gave up all that he had had, letting go of divinity to walk, to live with us in our humanity. This emptiness became our salvation and glory of the Father.

In the first reading from Ezechiel, the importance of steadfast commitment is shown to us. The first man begins well, but turns from the path and loses the virtue he had had. The second starts along the crooked path, but finds his way back to the straight and narrow and saves his life. Neither of these people is a model of complete dedication. In their struggles God shows us that he is here to accept our return to him.

The Gospel also presents us with two individuals, neither of whom is a paradigm of virtue. The first son quickly tells his father that he will not help with his father's work, but regrets his hasty "no" to his father and goes to do the needed work. The second son speaks in eagerness to accept the father's wishes, but then moves on with his own plans. As we have heard too often, actions do speak louder than words.

The conclusion to this short Gospel passage underscores the importance of putting our beliefs into action. Tax collectors, prostitutes, the chief priests and elders of the people were all invited by John the Baptist to choose the path of righteousness. Those we would have expected to hear the call, the chief priests and elders, turned their backs on John and refused to change their mind when they saw those not respected by society, the tax collectors and prostitutes, reforming their lives and abandoning their ways of self-centeredness. The so-called models of society clung to their self-chosen practices of virtue, while the outcasts of society let go of their selfish ways and were given the kingdom.

To what do we cling? What do we need to give up in order to put on the mind of Christ?