

Service for Week 21st -27th Sept 2026

By Chaplain Andy

Our Opening Prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ, you have touched our hearts, brought us joy and have given us life in all its fullness. Equip us now through your Spirit, to share with others the blessing we have found through your life and your words.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven,

hallowed be Thy name,

Thy kingdom come,

Thy will be done,

on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

and forgive us our trespasses

as we forgive them who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,

But deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom,

the power and the glory

for ever and ever.

Amen

Bible Reading Matthew 21:23-32

Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you this authority?" Jesus replied, "I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

John's baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from

men?" They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?'"

But if we say, 'From men'—we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet." So they answered Jesus, "We don't know." Then he said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

Jesus then said "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.'

" 'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. "Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go. "Which of the two did what his father wanted?"

"The first," they answered. Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.

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.

Holy words, Holy wisdom,

Thanks be to God.

Reflection

In the time of Jesus, the occupying Roman authority who worshiped their

own Roman gods allowed the people to follow their Jewish faith. So, when someone started preaching what was not the set formal teachings of Judaism the priests and elders started to ask – who gave this man Jesus the authority to preach like he does?

Jesus doesn't answer them directly but instead first asks them about where they thought John the Baptist got his authority from for his teaching and baptizing. Jesus then tells them a story about a vineyard owner who had two sons. When he asked one to work in the vineyard he refused but later changed his mind and went to work there. Then he asked his other son to work in the vineyard but he refused. Jesus asked the people listening to this story "Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered.

Jesus's message was that those who have listened to his teachings have made up their own minds about where his authority comes from. Like the boy who after initially saying no to his father later comes to accept his authority and goes to work in the vineyard. Jesus said it was from the ordinary people in the streets including those looked down on such as tax collectors and prostitutes that he received his authority. They were the ones who after hearing him came to recognise that he was from and of God and spoke in God's name.

In our world today there are many who question the authority of God. In the past most people, myself included, heard the word of God through Jesus's teachings taught to us from an early age at school assembly, Sunday school and church services. Today most schools do not start their day with Christian prayers and hymns as I did and Christianity is just one of the many religions they may include in a general talk about faiths. In the school where my daughter-in-law taught, they do not have carol services or put on a nativity play at Christmas. Far fewer children attend Sunday school and you will know how church attendance has rapidly declined over the years.

There is much less opportunity in our society today to hear the message of Jesus about God's love and forgiveness for each of us. But when it is heard we are able to recognize and respect the authority of God through Jesus Christ. Our prayer in our troubled world today is that more people will turn to the teachings of Jesus and come to accept God's love guidance for their lives.

Amen

Closing prayer

Lord Jesus, help me to speak of all you mean to me and of everything that I have found you to be, so that others may come to meet you and know you for themselves through your love and forgiveness.

Amen

Prayers inspired by Prayerfully Yours by Nick Fawcett