

God Does Not Discriminate

‡ A tender invitation (vv.28-31a)

‡ A gracious acceptance (vv.31b-32)

In the name of Jesus, God's Son our Savior, dearly redeemed family of God:

So you're walking along minding your own business when someone sticks a microphone in your face: "Are you a Christian bigot or homophobe?" How do you respond? Do you – a) Rely on your Depends; b) Say, "It depends on what TV station it is"; or c) Depend on God's Word? Luther's comparison seems a bit gross, but it's all too true. Whether a baby in diapers or elder Depends, our sins are disgusting to God, but only as long as it takes Him to clean us up and hold us close again as we love to hold our children and hug our grandparents. **God Does Not Discriminate.** "*For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.*" (Romans 11:32 NIV)

But as a list of one-liners put it, "Some minds are like concrete, all mixed up and permanently set." Such was the mindset of the ultra-religious leaders toward Jesus on Tuesday of Holy Week. After three years plotting His death, they heard the loud Hosanna's of Palm Sunday and lost it. They were like so many who want to serve God, but only as advisors. They expected to correct Head of God's Church, the Commander of the LORD's armies, the Angel of the LORD who brought judgment on the heads of unbelievers in ancient times. Jesus Christ, the Word of God Incarnate – their words will melt in the heat of His. And we will worship Him because **God Does Not Discriminate**, because He gives even us...

‡ A tender invitation (vv.28-31a)

Each of Jesus' parables is unique; so also *The Parable of the Two Sons*. It's intriguing how Jesus used these earthly stories with heavenly meanings to hide the truth from hardened unbelievers and to reveal the truth to childlike faith still today. Jesus spoke some of His kindest words to His worst enemies.

He's just getting warmed up when "*the chief priests and the elders of the people*" interrupted His teaching. "*By what authority are you doing these things?*" they demanded. "*And who gave you this authority?*" (21:23 NIV) Obviously, they think nobody could. But the Word of God Incarnate answers their word-trap in a bear trap of His own: "*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?' So they answered Jesus, 'We don't know.' Then he said, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.'*" (21:24-27 NIV)

Launching into His *Parable of the Two Sons*, Jesus asked, "*What do you think?*" Maybe they could think God's way if they would look at something familiar like family. Instead of an angry blast from God's Son on their blasphemous religious bigotry, Jesus gives **A tender invitation** to win their hearts for God. But you might be surprised where we stand here.

The parable is certainly not complicated. Any of the children could give the right answer. If the man's first son says, "No," then changes his mind, he certainly did what his father asked to go and work in the vineyard. The son who right away said, "Yes, Sir!" but went back to his computer games was disobedient because he never got outside to work in the vineyard.

And wouldn't everyone say, "Well, of course, I'm like the first son. Maybe I don't agree right away, but eventually I get there for God"? But look in the light. Many who say they're standing on the promises of God are only sitting on the premises. If you don't really want to obey your Father's commands, how are you loving God with all your heart and soul and mind? God wants willing workers. So why is this heart of mine always headed somewhere else? This parable is not supposed to make us

more self-righteous than we were before! If our hearts don't bleed for God or our feet won't follow where He leads, if our hands won't serve and our lips won't praise Him joyfully and eagerly, we're rebellious sons. Under the curse of the law we're no better than *"the tax collectors and the prostitutes"* who heard John the Baptist at the River Jordan calling them to repentance. But that's where religious bigotry and self-righteousness floundered in the current. Those same *"tax collectors and the prostitutes"* heard **A tender invitation**. It was music to their ears that God wanted them in His kingdom. Can you see the wonder of this? **God Does Not Discriminate**. To sinners like us He gives...

✠ **A gracious acceptance (vv.31b-32)**

It's only natural to think we accepted God. But God justice and grace turns that around. As writer put it, "God does not call the qualified; He qualifies the called." Remember the example of the second most famous tax collector in the Bible? The children could say Zacchaeus, the short little man who climbed a tree to see Jesus. Jesus invited Himself over and qualified Zacchaeus with powerful faith. You could tell the greedy man converted because he stood up and said: *"Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."* (Luke 19:8 NIV) Zacchaeus pledged over 50% of his income to God.

But Zacchaeus is not the most famous tax collector. Today's Gospel text is by a man Jesus called directly from the tax collector's booth. *"Follow me,"* Jesus said, *"and Matthew got up and followed him."* (Matthew 9:9 NIV) Imagine how Matthew felt when Jesus said, *"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."*

God Does Not Discriminate. Isn't that wonderful? When you're convinced that you're the worst of sinners, then God gives His **gracious acceptance** through repentance preachers like John the Baptist. God qualifies us to trust in the righteousness He alone can give instead of your own. Our distressed hearts are often like crying babies who don't know what's wrong. They only know they feel better when Mom or Dad change them, feed them and burp them. Trusting Christ's holy life, His innocent suffering and death throws open the gates of heaven which God slammed shut on all of us sinners. He has provided one Gate, one Door through the wall into His heavenly kingdom of light. People want to say, "Well, I was born this way," or "God will accept me the way I am." But that's like standing outside the city wall and saying, "I'm out here." Yes, you are! But God's wrath is coming and He wants you safe inside with Him. God does not grade on a curve; He grades on the cross. Will you accept His **tender invitation** and enjoy His **gracious acceptance**? **God Does Not Discriminate**.

Remember the crowds at a penitentiary in Florida a few years ago when a mass murderer was about to be executed? People outside were screaming for his blood. And he admitted he deserved to die. He had become convinced God's Word is right: *"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man."* (Genesis 9:6 NIV) Only God can read anyone's heart, but if that murder really did turn to Jesus for forgiveness, he died and went to heaven because *"the blood of Jesus, [God's] Son, purifies us from all sin."* (1 John 1:7 NIV) But the screamers trusting their righteousness instead of Christ, died and went to hell even if they never murdered anyone.

Truly, God's ways are not our ways nor our thoughts His thoughts. God says, *"The soul who sins is the one who will die....The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him."* (Ezekiel 18:20 NIV) **God Does Not Discriminate**. There's hope for all of us. One of the favorite Bible passages of repentant homosexuals, prostitutes and sinners of all kinds is one of my favorite too: *"That is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."* (1 Corinthians 6:11 NIV) So **tender**, so **gracious**, our God! Amen.