

Change and Conversion

Intro. In the previous passage, the Lord cleared the temple of the buyers and sellers who turned his Father's house into a religious farmers market. The chief priests and elders demanded to know on whose authority he did it. They wanted to know who he thought he was. In response he told them a story about who *they* were.

I. The answer to the question put to the chief priests and elders seemed easy enough: it was the son who in the end did what the father asked despite his initial no. They were leaders and yet did not pay attention to John the Baptist's call for conversion. But the most disrespected people in the society of the time *listened and responded* to John's message to change their lives. Even that clear sign had no effect on the chief priests and elders. For Matthew this was a very

personal experience: he had been a tax collector who changed his life and followed the Lord. We all in need of such conversion. A change of mind and heart that says "yes" with actions not only with words. Sometimes we mean well and say yes but don't follow through on our word. Sometimes we say no but later change our hearts and follow the Lord through our actions. Conversion means regular examination of who we think we are and facing the reality of our no's and our yes's. The chief priests and elders' hearts didn't seem to be in it. Their leadership had become something other than encouraging prayer and holiness of life. They said yes to teaching others to follow the law, but no to follow up with actions in their own lives. Until John the Baptist and the Lord came, the outcasts of society believed heaven was not possible because of

their sin. Listening to the teaching of John and Jesus, they understood their first no to God could be changed to yes.

Concl. The scriptures are never only about the people in them. The scriptures are always about us too. There is not a home I know of – including my own – that has not heard, “Yes, I’ll take out the garbage,” only for the parent to later find it’s still in the kitchen and someone is still sitting in front of the computer or television. Or another who says, “No, I’m too busy to take you to the park,” but then realizes how important it is to spend time with his or her family and goes to the park. We can never be too busy to listen to the Lord. Saying yes to God in church on Sunday but not following it up with Christian behavior during the week is a contradiction and eventually has long-term consequences. No to

God can be overcome by conversion of heart. The answer to the Lord’s question is for us not to be like either of the two sons in the gospel. Both were wrong, but **one** realized his mistake and finally did what the father asked.

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