

## A Message from Robin+

*“What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ He answered, ‘I will not’; but later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, ‘I go, sir’; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him. Matthew 21: 28-32*

There is no escaping the political atmosphere around us right now. It’s like a virus, infecting people everywhere. Some of the symptoms of this political virus are anger and rage, an inability to stop taking sides, smirking and denigration, name calling and blaming others, ignoring the facts, a sense of self-righteousness, denial, anxiety, and depression. Many of us are feeling sick. Some of my friends don’t believe we should talk about politics in church. Some of my friends believe it’s of great importance to talk about politics in church. I agree with my friends!

As your pastor I am called to listen to you and pray for you no matter your politics. As your pastor I am also called to remind you of the message of the Gospel as exemplified in the life of Jesus. Does that mean that I tell you who to vote for in elections? As the Apostle Paul would say, “By no means!” What it does mean is that as we study together the stories and parables in the Gospel, there will be times when Jesus surprises and challenges us, times when what Jesus says and does will bring us up short.

The thing about Jesus is that what he says always matches what he does. That’s what I love about this week’s parable of the two brothers. Priest and author Barbara Brown Taylor refers to them as the Yes and No Brothers. This parable may remind us of our childhood reactions to the things our parents asked us to do. Whether or not we had siblings, we can all identify. Faithfully doing chores and being obedient to our parents were generally not consistent behaviors when we were children. Sometimes we were the brother who said yes and never got around to following through, and at other times we would say no and then realize our responsibility and complete the task.

As Christians following Jesus, we are called to learn about what Jesus has said and done, and then to go and do likewise. So, you might ask what is political about this? What is political is how we vote based on what we know of Jesus. As Christians we vote our conscience, but even more importantly we vote with the conscience of Jesus, we vote with the mind of Christ. As Christians we are called to know Jesus, to pray for God’s hope for the world, and to vote in ways that accomplish God’s mission of justice, which may not always be the mission of every political candidate.

Voting is one action we can take to bring about the kingdom – God’s kingdom. We can also commit to bringing about the kingdom every day as we work to be sure that what we say matches what we do. This is going to take some work because life is complicated and we need reminders about what Jesus would have us do. Will we say, “Yes, we follow Jesus” and then not actually follow with our actions, or will we say, “no” but then come to realize that God has need of our work in this world and get busy? There is much work to be done, as the multiple calamities of 2020 are revealing. We can be a part of healing the multiple viruses that are infecting us as we learn more about the words and actions of Jesus and then living them out in our own lives.