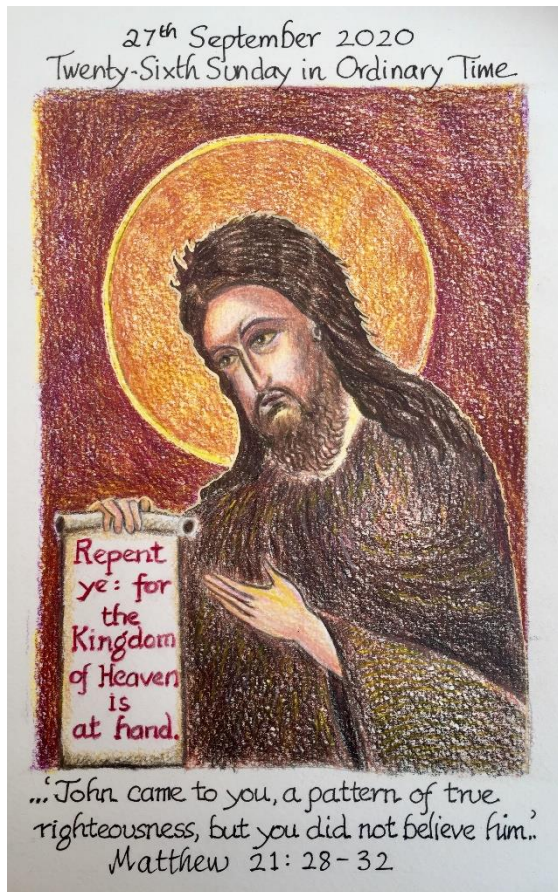


HOMILY 27  
26 Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)



We have in the Gospel today one of the most beautiful passages acknowledging Jesus as redeemer and saviour. "His state was divine" Paul tells us, "yet he did not cling to his divinity with God but emptied himself to assume the duties of a slave." Making the ultimate sacrifice he gave his life for all, accepting death, death on the cross. But Paul acknowledges that this was not the end, Jesus had humbled himself even unto death but God raised him high giving him a name that is above all names so that he would be adored by all, that all would bend the knee at the name of Jesus and every tongue acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord.

The Pharisees and those in authority challenge Jesus as to his authority to speak. They are far from acknowledging Jesus as the Lord. Jesus in response to them gives us three parables, the first, the parable of the two sons, we hear today. In the coming weeks we will hear the parable of the Vineyard and the tenants, and the parable of the wedding feast. All three parables come in his final teaching in the temple. He has made his solemn entry into Jerusalem, has purged the temple of those making it a den of thieves and now he challenges those who query his authority. Not only do they challenge Jesus authority but that of John the Baptist. Here in the persons of John the Baptist and of Jesus Christ we have the completion of the New and Old Testaments. Together they complete the fullness of the Covenant initiated by Abraham and fulfilled by Jesus on the cross, a covenant now renewed where all will bend the knee at the name of Jesus and all will acclaim Jesus as Lord.

Life in the time of Jesus was lived in public. The elders meeting at the gate would exchange views on all the current activity in the town or village. It is suggested

that the second son In the parable of the Two Sons by agreeing to work in the vineyard but in reality having no intention of doing so was in fact saving his father's honour in contrast to the first son whose public disobedience would bring dishonour to his father and his house. The fact that he would eventually do as asked would not have lessened the shame. Neither son gains much from their reactions to their father's request.

The parable is often applied to the leaders of the Jewish people who had embraced the Covenant but had failed to respond to the demands of the Covenant. Here were the second son of the story. In the tax collectors and sinners we have the first sons, those who in their lives of sinfulness had turned away from God, but who had subsequently sought God and his loving forgiveness and had turned their life around. They, as Jesus tells us, will be first in the kingdom of God.

The story also reminds us that the words of Jesus apply as much today to us as at the time of Jesus. Each of us at one time or another can be hypocritical in our dealings with God and with our fellow man and women. We can claim to be followers of Jesus but that is not witnessed by our actions. In turn each one of us is in need of God's forgiveness, and when we acknowledge that and seek out Christ for his forgiveness then we do God's will.