

Admirers Or Followers?

Jesus told us a story, a parable, in Matthew 21:28-32. Jesus said a man had two sons, and he went to the first and he said "Please go and work in the vineyard today." And the son replied, "I won't," and goes away. But later he regrets what he said and, goes to work. As the story goes on, Jesus said the father goes to the second son and says, "Would you go work in the vineyard today?" The second son says very piously, "Oh yes, Father, gladly. I'll just rush right out." Then he goes down to the river to fish, or some where. We're not told specifically where he went. But he didn't go to the vineyard. Jesus wants followers not admirers. One son who says "No" but then repents and goes to the vineyard and follows. He doesn't want to do the hard work and says so, but he does it anyway. Another son who piously says: "Oh yes, Father, of course, of course. Anything you say." But he doesn't do it. He gives lip service but not service. I wonder which of the two sons are we?

Jesus said, "I was hungry and you fed me." That's exalted teaching. I mean, who can argue with that progressive, kind-hearted, and generous teaching. I was hungry and you fed me. A volunteer served food at a soup kitchen once said "The smell in the room was overpowering. The t-shirts seemed pasted on the men with fourteen days of sweat. I would stink of cabbage and ammonia and sweat for days after I left. I almost gagged. I expected, at the end of it all, to love the poor. To be filled with a warm glow. But I didn't feel any love for the men there. I complained to my minister, and he said, "You're not going down there to feel good, you are going there to feed the hungry. We don't go to the soup kitchens to be loved, we go there to feed people. That's it. We go to give the poor something to eat." We may volunteer to serve the poor and think we're going to come home feeling all warm and cozy inside about how righteous we are. But we may not feel that way. Jesus just said, "Feed my lambs." Feed my lambs. Are we admirers or followers?

Are we admirers or followers? One son said, "No, I won't go," and he later went. Another son said, "Yes, of course I will go.", but he didn't. As Christians, we talk the talk, but do we walk the walk? Jesus calls us to walk, with our cross on our shoulder.

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