

Bible reading Matthew 21:23-32

Being open to change your mind

Jesus is questioned about the nature and source of his authority. After testing his questioners, who decline to respond, Jesus also refuses to answer. Instead, he tells a parable about the priority of faithfulness and obedience over appearances.



Bible notes



In a short space of time Jesus has ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey and been hailed by the crowd as their new king, sent by God. It is made clear, though, that he has come in peace, not as a military leader (21:1-11). He has challenged the Temple operations that helped to support the work of the Temple and to facilitate those bringing sacrifices as the law demanded, but that also got in the way of the Temple's true purpose as God's dwelling place, the place of prayer (21:12-13). He has healed and prophesied (21:14-22). Now Jesus is questioned by the religious leaders about his right to behave in such a way. They have authority in this place, and Jesus' behaviour is challenging that authority by calling into question the status quo they are maintaining.

The parable of the two sons highlights the problem: people can rethink, weigh up their options, change their minds – and yet no matter what evidence is presented to them, the religious leaders are immovable. In their defence, their role is to safeguard the faith. Time after time throughout their history the people of God have turned away from God and suffered the consequences. From being a sizeable nation, the people of God have diminished to a relatively small group living partly in the occupied territory that is all that remains of their promised land, and partly dispersed across the surrounding countries. The religious leaders are working hard to reshape and renew the faith, and to protect it. Jesus' presentation of the kingdom of God as open to all presents a challenge in a context where ethnicity and religious affiliation have come to mean more than faith or obedience. What would it take to change their minds?



Mix two parts cornflour to one part water to make oobleck – it's neither solid or liquid. Place it in a tub with spoons and blocks. Play with the oobleck and discover the many ways it changes.

DISCOVER



Learn more about the important biblical industry of vineyards using the internet. Search 'ancient vineyards'. This website of the Brigham Young University has wonderful picture-based information: <https://emp.byui.edu/SATTERFIELD/ANCIENT%20ISRAEL/VINEYARDS%20AND%20WINEPRESSES.HTM>

This article from the *Jerusalem Post* is very informative: <https://www.jpost.com/Arts-and-Culture/Food-And-Wine/Wine-Talk-Ancient-wine>

LISTEN



Listen to the chorus of 'Shoulda, Woulda, Coulda', by Beverly Knight, starting at 1:02.

Think about something you regret. What should you have done? What would you have done differently if you had the chance? What could you do now to change either that situation, or, if that's gone, if you were faced with something again? Talk to God about how you've changed.

First impressions

- What does it take for you to change your mind?
- How can you make sure that you are open to change?
- What might be the consequences of doing so?



Pray 

Gracious God,
we thank you for the people that challenge us.
We thank you for the people who help us see another point of view.
We thank you for the people who open our eyes to a world that's different to ours,
even when this is really uncomfortable. Amen.

WALK 

Go for a stroll in a familiar place, but today choose to go on the opposite side of the street or follow a circular route in the opposite direction. What do you notice? Was it hard to break your usual habit? How can you be open to change this week?