

Growth Group Questions

18th Sunday after Pentecost, October 1, 2023

Introduction

Our theme this week speaks about spiritual insincerity – in other words, hypocrisy. Share with the group how you answer the objections of nonmembers who reject the church because of the hypocrites in it.

In Our Worship

1. At our 10:30am service we get the special privilege of baptizing one of our twelve-year old members. How is baptizing an older person different from baptizing an infant? How is it the same?
2. Our first song on Sunday was title “No Longer Slaves.” How does this new Christian hymn connect to our theme of the day about choosing to serve God in our Christian faith?

Into the Word – Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

3. “The parents eat sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” This Israelite proverb was a way for one generation to say they were being punished for the actions of their parents and ancestors. What does God clearly say in verse four though?
4. Some imagine that the God of the Old Testament is a vengeful and frightening being. Point out a few parts of this reading that show that He is quite the opposite in reality.
5. Some think that repentance is just an acknowledgement of sin or wrongdoing. Verses 30-32 show that true repentance is more than just a change of heart – it’s a change of direction as well. What might repentance look like in the following situations?
 - A couple lives together before marriage
 - A business owner cheated on his taxes
 - A teenager bullies and gossips about another student online

Into the Word – Matthew 21:28-32

6. The text suggestion for this week includes the verses before as well. They may help us understand why Jesus tells the parable. Read the verses and discuss what the parable has to say about authority.

23 Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you this authority?”

24 Jesus replied, “I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. 25 John’s baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?”

They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ 26 But if we say, ‘Of human origin’—we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet.” 27 So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.” Then he said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

7. This parable is one of the simplest Jesus teaches. Explain why it is so important in our time of dangerous “culturally approved, but tolerant of all” Christianity.
8. Why is it important to recognize we are sometimes the first son? Why is it important to recognize we are also the second son?

Closing Prayer

At our 10:30 service we install Kathy Smart as parish nurse, a role that will hopefully allow us as a church to show love and compassion toward our members who suffer in various physical, mental, or emotional ways. Instead of giving you a prayer this week, craft one of your own and ask God to bless Kathy in the work she will be doing for our church.