

## Order of Service for September 27, 2020 8:30 AM

A video of the service will “go live” at **8:45 AM** (note change in time) Sunday morning on Memorial’s YouTube page here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqritUPMNz38pvRJ>

and on Memorial’s Facebook page here:

<https://www.facebook.com/mlcames/>

### Prelude:

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

### Opening Hymn: “When Morning Gilds the Skies”- Hymn 807

P: Hear the Gospel of the Lord from Matthew 21.

C: **Glory to You, O Lord.**

P: And when He (Jesus) entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to Him as He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?” Jesus answered them, “I also will ask you one question, and if you tell Me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?” And they discussed it among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ But if we say, ‘From man,’ we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet.” So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And He said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: **Praise to You, O Christ.**

P: Do we recognize authority? Do we know what it means that Jesus has authority?

C: **God alone has authority. Authority is not wishful thinking. It is not something we can ignore.**

P: Just as we cannot ignore a wall that is front of us, a 100 foot drop, the power from a high voltage line, the fumes of deadly chemicals, the heat from a furnace, or the danger of something radioactive, we ignore God only at our own risk.

C: **God who has all authority has shown His authority not just in power, but in His mercy through His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. We praise You, O God, the source of all authority.**

P: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**



## **Old Testament Lesson** – Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

R: The word of the LORD came to me: "What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? As I live, declares the LORD GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine: the soul who sins shall die. ... "Yet you say, 'The way of the LORD is not just.' Hear now, O house of Israel: Is My way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? When a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it; for the injustice that he has done he shall die. Again, when a wicked person turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life. Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions that he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the LORD is not just.' O house of Israel, are My ways not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the LORD GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the LORD GOD; so turn, and live."

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

## **Holy Gospel** – Matthew 21:28-32

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter.

**C: Glory to You, O Lord.**

P: [Jesus said,] "What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went. And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" [The Pharisees] said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before 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 when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him."

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**C: Praise to You, O Christ.**

**Statement of Faith:** The Close of the Commandments – **Page 322**

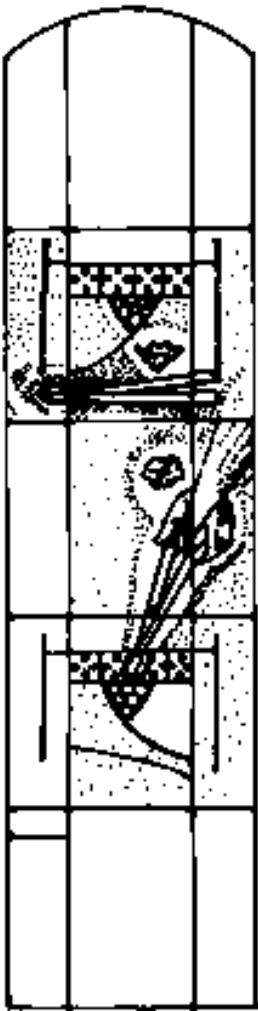
**Sermon Hymn:** "Oh, That the Lord Would Guide My Ways" - **Hymn # 707**

**Sermon:** “*Obedient Children* “- Matthew 21:23-32

Despite what politicians tell us, our economy depends a lot more on what the private sector does or what happens in the world around us than the government. Our federal government may be involved with the clean up after the storm on August 10 and the hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico, but it was the utilities who hired extra crew from around the country, preparations and contributions made from companies and local governments who are doing the lion’s share. Our best regulators in our own government, like the Fed, are nonpolitical. And the best way to stop the spread of the disease is when people take the initiative to do the right things.

That doesn’t surprise us because our general thoughts about politicians are that they are all words and no action. They may look good on the screen, but what are they really doing? We say, “Put your money where your mouth is,” or “Actions speak louder than words,” or “Talk is cheap—even peanuts cost money.”

With all the options we have for watching films and shows, many watch old TV shows. But if you look at them, things can appear to move slowly compared to what is done today. Movies can be carried on today completely by their actions and effects without having to have much plot, dialogue, or acting. The action has become more important than the words.



Jesus’ parable seems to agree with that. Jesus tells the story of two sons. The father asks the first to do something, and he says, “No.” Then he changes his mind and does what His father said. The second son says, “Yes,” to his father, then doesn’t do as he promised. Jesus asks, “Which one did the will of his father, the first or the second?” The obvious answer is the first one, who let his actions speak his words.

It is easy then to fill in for the second son the enemies of Jesus. They seemed to talk a good talk, but never really do anything. They say all kinds of pious things, but what did they do?

But that claim could be put against the church today. What is the church really doing today to help people distanced by the pandemic? Yes we provide online worship services, but couldn’t that be done by just a few big churches that can provide high quality videos? Wouldn’t our finances be better used feeding the hungry or building new houses in the areas hit by the hurricanes?

Jesus’ parable does not involve two workers. It involves two sons. Getting the work done is not as important as their obedience to their father. The father would be upset not so much by the fact that the work would not get done, but that his sons did not obey him. Far more important than the work was the relationship between the father and his sons.

This relationship was so important in the Old Testament. Sons were not just cheap labor for the fathers. They were how the fathers would live on. Yes, fathers wanted their sons to obey them and get the work done, but even more they wanted their sons to do it for the right reason—out of respect and love for their fathers. It is what people can feel

about the “family farm.” You keep it going not just to make a living, but to carry on what your forebears established. That is why Jesus uses that very relationship to describe our relationship with God. He taught us to pray, “Our Father.”

The obedience is far more important than the work done. We live in a world that values accomplishment and hard work. When I do premarital counseling and ask people how they want others to see them, their number one answer is “hard-working.” My wife can tell you that if I am sitting around doing nothing and she comes near, my instant reaction is to stop and try to look like I am doing something good. That is from how I tried to look good to my parents. So we equate hard work and doing things to being good, to being closer to God.

Look at the Pharisees, the ones Jesus was talking to in Matthew. They were not lazy. They worked hard at being good. Paul speaks in Philippians 3 about how hard he worked to be a good Pharisee. Whatever anyone said about Paul, he would never be called lazy. And the Pharisees were respected by the people because they worked so hard at being good. They had no political or physical power over other people as rulers would have. Their power came from their popularity as people who seemed to do so much to be good.

We are tempted to be that way too. The more I do, the more I am good. The more I earn, the more I deserve. The more I keep busy, the less I can be accused of doing wrong. But is that obedience?

We need to look at Jesus, who spoke the story of the two sons. Jesus did what He was told. He accomplished the mission of going to cross and suffering with our sins. He did everything right and did nothing wrong. But what was behind that is His obedience to His Father—an obedience that doesn’t get things done, but above all that is based on total love for His Father. I think we picture Jesus constantly calculating everything he had to do like a student trying to get all the test answers just right. Certainly He was perfect and did all He was supposed to do. But behind all that was His faith in His Father. Obedience to God is first and foremost to love and trust in Him, not what we do or accomplish. When Jesus pointed out that His enemies were like the second son, He didn’t talk about what they should have done, but in Whom they should have believed. “For John (the Baptist) came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.” Faith is listening to Jesus, which leads to us loving Him.

Jesus calls on us not just to do what He says, but to trust in Him. That is why He calls us to do things that may not seem like accomplishing much—praying, hearing and studying His Word, going to Holy Communion, spending time with His people, the Church. That involves so often not what we do, but how we stop and listen. Jesus wants not the work He wants us to do as much as He wants us, like how the father wanted his sons more than what they could do.

In our world of getting things done, we often put that ahead of the people God puts in our lives. I attended a pastors' conference where we were told by a pastor who works with congregations in conflict that we are so often focused on fixing problems that we forget about the people involved. What Christ has given us is not the power to fix things, but the forgiveness

to restore people to God and then to each other. The real problems so often are not the outside issues we fuss over, but the sins in our hearts. What Jesus gives us is the forgiveness to change those hearts. Then even if the bad things remain, the people still have a relationship. In a marriage you can't usually change the differences between a husband and a wife, but forgiveness can restore the relationship which is greater than the differences.

That's why Jesus calls us to obey, not to get things done, but to keep strong the relationship between Him and us and each other. St. Paul said famously in 1 Corinthians, "If I have faith to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." Why we do what we do is more important than what we do. For we are God's children, children who in our hearts can obey.

### **Confessing our Sins and Receiving God's Forgiveness**

P: The people of Israel complained, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."

**C: Or as we might say today, "It is not our fault that we do wrong. We were born this way. Why did You make us this way, God?"**

P: We complain about Your way of doing things.

**C: "If only You would do it my way, God!"**

P: But whose ways are at fault?

**C: Is it not our ways that are at fault?**

**ALL: LORD God, we confess that we don't want to take responsibility for what we have done and have failed to do. We are at fault. Help us to stop trying to shift the blame and depend only on Your mercy. Forgive us!**

P: In the name and by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you of all Your sin in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

### **Hymn of Praise: "How Wide the Love of Christ" - Hymn # 535**

#### **Epistle Lesson – Philippians 2:1-4, 14-18**

R: So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others... Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**Prayer:** (based on Philippians 2)

P: Lord Jesus, give us the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

**C: Empower us to do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than ourselves. Move each of us to look not only to his or her own interests, but also to the interests of others.**

P: Give us the same mind You have.

**C: Though You were in the form of God the Father, You did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Yourself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, You humbled Yourself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**

P: Help us to do all things without grumbling or questioning, that we may be blameless and innocent,

**C: children of our Father without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom we can shine as lights in the world.**

(Other prayers)

P: All this we pray as we rejoice in You and pray as You taught us . . .

**Lord's Prayer:**

**Final Prayer:**

P: God of love, You know our frailties and failures. Give us the grace to overcome them, keep us from those things that harm us, and guide us into the way of salvation, through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**C: Amen.**

**Closing Hymn:** *"Forth in Thy Name, O Lord, I Go"* - Hymn 854

**Postlude**

