

Homily. 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. A. 30/9-1/10 2023.

'The road to hell is paved with good intentions'. No one is certain where this saying came from. However, many ancient proverbs are similar so we can be certain that it expresses a deep truth about us and our human experience. Sometimes this saying means that good intentions not well thought through and poorly implemented create a kind of hell for us to survive. More often it points out that good intentions and fine words are useless, unless they're backed up by good deeds and right actions. It's this meaning that relates to the story and message of the gospel.

Two sons, one father, sharing in the families vine and wine business. Everyone has a role to play, a job to do and a contribution to make. When asked to help the first son says no, but thinks again and acts rightly. The second son says yes, initially impressing his father, but then suits himself and does nothing. His words and intentions remain an illusion.

The Chief Priests of the Temple and the leaders of the people wanted Jesus to tell them his authority for saying and doing what he was. Jesus story points out that all of their power and authority comes from old law, traditions and words, but not from their deeds. John the Baptist preached God's word, sinners heard it and acted by changing their way of life. On the other hand, these authorities did all that they could to ignore, shut up and get rid of John so that they could their keep power and positions.

The thing about this parable is that it's as fresh as it ever was, as relevant today as 2000 years ago and like our saying about good intentions and the paved road to hell, it asks us to think about the integration, or lack

thereof, between what we say, mean and actually do. Since none of us are perfect yet there'll always be a gap between between our intentions and words, and our actions and way of living. The aim for us is to get head and heart, intention and will, words and deeds as connected and in sync as we can, or as all the 12 step healing and recovery programmes say, to not just talk the talk, but really walk the walk.

In this work were never alone. As a community of sinners seeking wholeness we have each other, companions on the journey. We also have Jesus, God's word, the giver of mercy and healing whose life-giving Spirit dwells in us. When we fail in making our words and deeds join up, and we do fail, what we've got to do is look to the Cross of Christ. There we'll see God, emptying out to be one of us and poured out further still in Jesus, serving us to death, until he's raised in glory as Lord by the Father.

It's he who gives himself to us now in our worship, promising to be with us until the end. Christ's kind love connects us when we've failed, joins us up as we wish we always were, helps us to put or intentions into action making us both whole and holy. This is what salvation means, becoming a responsive and responsible child of God, perfect images of the Son today.