

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Choice and Following Through** Third Week of Advent Tuesday, December 16, 2014  
8:15 AM Zep 3:1-2, 9-13; **Mt 21:28-32** (The kingdom of God is a state of mind. The kingdom of man or the city of man is also a state of mind. Which one are we going to live in?)

We are continuing the dialogue between Jesus and the chief priests and the elders. The chief priests, connected to the elders are the elite; they are the authorities. So this is pretty important. He is not just talking to some rabbis. He is not just talking to the scribes. Scribes just write things; they are the secretaries. He is not talking to them. He is talking to the chief priests. **He is talking to the men of authority.** And he is saying, **“Prostitutes and tax collectors are entering the kingdom of God before you.”** So these are fighting words.

They follow yesterday’s story, if you remember, when they came to him and said, “By what authority are you doing these things?” meaning throwing all the sheep and oxen out of the Temple. And he asked them, well, “What about John the Baptist? Is he from God or from man? Does he have heavenly authority, or is it merely human?” And they wouldn’t answer the question. So now Jesus is saying, well, when it comes to John the Baptist, you didn’t listen to him or accept his preaching, but the tax collectors did, the prostitutes did. In fact, actually the Bible says the entire area of Judea, all the citizens went to John the Baptist—that’s probably exaggerated, and all the citizens of Jerusalem—probably exaggerated. But the point is **there was this groundswell of support for John the Baptist, and even then the chief priests didn’t**—no way. That’s what Jesus is pointing out here. Even when you saw this response you still didn’t. So it’s really a matter of **confronting people in authority and telling them how wrong they are.** And in a way Jesus is saying I have this authority because I’m confronting you. It’s truth in action. It’s words that have power because of the consequences. Jesus is putting his life on the line, and will eventually lose it of course.

Now this entering **the kingdom of God**, again, this is not a place. **It's a state of mind.** They are opening themselves to the kingdom of God. They are recognizing something, a dimension if you will, a way of being conscious if you will, a new sense of meaning and purpose that is propelling them and motivating them to change the way they are living. But the chief priests don't have any of this. They are not in that state of mind.

Now that same division occurs today. **The people who rule the world**, the people who are the elite, **don't listen to God.** And all **the rest of us have to decide** are we going to go along with God and the kingdom of God, or are we going to go along with what Augustine called the "city of man"? He didn't call the kingdom of God the "kingdom of God"; he called it the "city of God." The city of God is a state of mind. The kingdom of God is a state of mind. **The kingdom of man or the city of man is also a state of mind. Which one are we going to live in?** We can't assume just because we are baptized we are in or just because we come to church that we are in the city of God or living in the kingdom of God. **It's a matter of choice and following through the choice.**

The second son made the choice, but he never followed through. **The first son changed his mind. That's conversion.** That's what the prostitutes and tax collectors were doing, changing their mind and following through.