

December 16, 2025



## DISCERNING THE GOOD

By Sister Jane DeLisle, CSJ

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### Today's Gospel

*Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people:*

*“What is your opinion?*

*A man had two sons.*

*He came to the first and said,*

*‘Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.’*

*The son said in reply, ‘I will not,’*

*but afterwards he changed his mind and went.*

*The man came to the other son and gave the same order.*

*He said in reply, ‘Yes, sir,’ but did not go.*

*Which of the two did his father’s will?”*

*They answered, “The first.”*

*Jesus said to them, “Amen, I say to you,*

*tax collectors and prostitutes*

*are entering the Kingdom of God before you.*

*When John came to you in the way of righteousness,*

*you did not believe him;  
but tax collectors and prostitutes did.  
Yet even when you saw that,  
you did not later change your minds and believe him.”*

**MATTHEW 21:28-32**

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## Reflection

Today's Gospel illustrates a common truth about the human condition. I can identify with both sons in today's story. How about you? Have you ever agreed to do something that you later regretted, or found an excuse for not following through to completion? I can even beg off fun things. The ability to change one's mind is a human act and works for the good or for ill.

Every Sunday, we recite the creed and in so doing agree to live according to a belief system. Yet, following through in daily life can be difficult. Perhaps there are neighbors with whom I have difficulty, those I do not like very much. Even with the best of intention, there are incidents when living the values and beliefs of our faith can be lackluster. *“Love your neighbor as yourself,”* is not as easy as one would think.

The second son's ready response of “Yes, Sir,” and then failure to follow through on his word reminds me of a Jesuit mentor who was fond of saying, **“The road to hell is paved with good intention.”** The second son gave a perfunctory reply to a familiar request. Later he may have preferred to do something more to his liking without considering his commitment to his father's request.

Replying negatively, for whatever reason, the first son seems more discerning. After considering the request and reflecting on his inner and outer reality, he changed his mind and went to work.

There have been occasions when -- asked to shift focus in ministry that I had never considered -- my initial response, often unspoken, was, *“No, not me!”* or at other times, *“This is a wonderful possibility -- count me in!”* Upon further consideration and discerning *“what it is that God and neighbor has for me today,”* I change my mind. Discernment provides the means to respond in union with God and my truest self. Perhaps, *“Let me think and pray about this and I will get back to you,”* is a better reply for bigger invitations.

In the everyday smaller requests, discerning what is appropriate also applies. Once when finishing grocery shopping, a young disheveled and bearded man gently asked if I could help him. I looked at him and said, *“Sorry, not*

*today.”* And he replied, “*Thanks anyway. God bless you.*” By the time I had loaded the groceries into the trunk of the car, I changed my mind. I took money from my purse and went back and gave it to him. He seemed surprised and thanked me for my kindness.

Changing one’s mind after discerning options is a gift of God’s great tenderness for us and for those with whom we engage daily. The message is to be discerning people and to consider going out of oneself for the sake of the other. Discerning the good keeps me off the “*path to hell paved by good intentions.*”

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### For Pondering

- To what might God be inviting you to right now?
- When have you changed your mind, and acted contrary to your initial response?
- What stretches your mind and heart toward generosity for the good of the other?

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## For Prayer

*Take hope, my heart!*

*The wisdom and lavish love of God create space for me to change my mind,  
my heart's reply, my ability to do good and to serve.*

*Thank you for the blessed gift of discernment that enables me to consider the  
inner and outer reality of my life in union with you.*

*Teach me to respond to what "is mine to do" each day.*

*Please expand my capacity to discern well your invitations in my daily life.  
Keep me true to my word and to the blessed opportunities you place before me  
that stretch me to be and act for the "dear neighbor without distinction."*

*Amen.*

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