

Wed., Nov. 30, 2011

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## Scripture

Matthew 21:23-32

<sup>23</sup>When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?"

<sup>24</sup>Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. <sup>25</sup>Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' <sup>26</sup>But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet." <sup>27</sup>So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

<sup>28</sup>"What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' <sup>29</sup>He answered, 'I will not'; but later he changed his mind and went. <sup>30</sup>The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir'; but he did not go. <sup>31</sup>Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. <sup>32</sup>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 after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him."

## Devotional

"By what authority are you doing these things?"

The question put to Jesus is ultimately concerning power and its proper exercise. In response to the challenge to Jesus' authority put by the chief priests and elders of the people, Jesus poses a riddle concerning John the Baptist, which they cannot answer. Because they have been found duplicitous in their questioning, Jesus will not answer their question.

In theology we put our questions to God. In doing so we try to probe into the mystery of God's self-presentation, first to Israel, then in, through, and as Jesus of Nazareth. But we must do our questioning in a manner appropriate to our subject of enquiry. We bring our questions honestly and reverentially, even prayerfully. We bring our questions as expressions of faith, within the framework of grace, seeking to know God more faithfully. In such manner, then, our questions of God are open to God. When that happens we too will be surprised by joy when we discover that God speaks to us.

## Prayer

Lord, may our questions be honest and open. May our ears be receptive to your Word. May our minds be conformed to your truth. And may our hearts be warmed by your presence. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.