



In Matthew 21:23-27 The temple leaders come to Jesus to ask a question... who is he? Where does his authority come from? On the surface it's an appropriate challenge to make to a new teacher from outside of their traditions, but as Jesus asks them a question in response it becomes clear that these leaders aren't interested in honest discussion, but are cynically trying to trap Jesus.

Taking the passage in context we see that not only have these leaders rejected John the Baptist's teaching in Matthew 3, but they've also already made up their mind on Jesus- reacting with "indignation" to his miracles and praise in Mat 21:14-15.

Jesus' response in verses 28-32 addresses their "indignation"- angry disgust at seeing the unclean and sinners getting access to the kingdom of heaven, essentially dealing with the question "How can I find a place in the kingdom of heaven".

Two sons, representing the sinners/unclean and the superficial righteous are contrasted, but only the penitent older son is revealed to have done what their Father wanted.

In verses 31-32 we see that the temple leaders are outraged to see sinners repenting and receiving grace, they still haven't twigged that

they need to do the same. In the "upside down" kingdom of heaven our security is not in ancestry, tradition, or our own righteousness, but entirely in repenting and believing in Jesus.

Questions for homegroups

- Read back over v12-27. How are the Jewish authorities portrayed? What motives seem to underpin their question?
- Read over the parable in v28-32. How does this add to the portrait of the Jewish leaders? What is the message they need to hear?
- Are there times that we are like these leaders, or like the second son? What do we need to hear from this passage at those times?
- What is your instinctive reaction to verse 31? In what ways are v31-32 an encouragement as well as a challenge to us?