

## SERMON FOR “BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY”

Pentecost 15--Year A

Gospel: Matthew 21:28-32

May only the truth be spoken, and only the truth be heard,  
this I pray in Jesus' name.

On this “back to church” Sunday I am very thankful that the passage from the Gospel of Matthew for today is the one we just heard read because, whether you are a person who said “Yes” or “No” in your initial response to your colleague, friend, family member or neighbour when you were asked to come to church today, all of us here at St. Leonard's right now are delighted that you actually did come!

All are most welcome here, and we hope that you will find our parish a welcoming and happy place in which to sing praises to God, to give thanks to God for God's many blessings, and to find fellowship with others who are trying, with God's help, to live the Christian life faithfully according to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

In particular, this means that we focus on putting into practice in our daily lives the two commandments of Jesus as they appear in the Gospel of Mark, chapter 12, verses 29-31. In that passage, Jesus says:

Love the lord your God  
With all your heart,  
With all your soul,  
With all your mind,  
And with all your strength.  
This is the first and the great commandment.  
The second is like it:  
Love your neighbour as yourself.

These are the words of Jesus that are to inform our actions every day.

This story that Jesus tells of the two sons is one of my favourites because it is fairly simple to relate to and because its theme is so readily applicable to our daily lives. We all have heard the expression: “Oh, she is all talk and no action!” Surely each of us has had experience of its truth? In telling his parable of the two sons, Jesus wants us to realize that what we do is more important than what we say we will do.

Is it your experience that loving actions speak louder than words? Think of the person who arrives at your home—after you have experienced some family

crisis—with a meal you just have to heat up and eat. Think of the person who knows that someone is in hospital and who makes the time to visit. These actions speak louder than words, don't they?

Jesus wants us not only to say “Yes” when he commands us to love one another, but what he really wants is for us actually to act in loving ways towards one another. Jesus wants us to say, “Yes” when he says to us, “Follow me”, but what he really wants is for us actually to follow him!

We follow Jesus by learning about the example Jesus set for our lives through our reading of the bible, the sacred text that informs our faith. We follow Jesus by putting into action his teachings and by following his command to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

Our true identity, and our authority to love one another and to follow Jesus flow from who we are as individuals and as a community bound together in the person and power of Jesus Christ.

Let us make sure that in this community in which St. Leonard's serves, “They will know that we are Christians by our love.” Amen.