

Father Dave's Weekly Homily

09/25/11..... 26 A

-- *No, I'm not going to stay home and mow the lawn. You can't tell me what to do!* How often have you heard that type of complaint from your adolescent son or daughter? Can you remember saying that or something similar to your parents?

-- Yes, it's in the nature of young people to assert their independence. Sometimes they do that even when they end up doing what you want—just to make the point that it is *their* choice to do it.

-- When it comes to doing what God requires of us, often we all can be like the rebellious teenager, no matter what our age. We don't like to be commanded to do something, even if we realize that, in the end, what is commanded is good for us.

-- There are other times when we can be like the son who talks a good game to his father but doesn't follow up. Sometimes we have good intentions, but we don't act on them. We say we value prayer, but we don't carve out the time to do it. We say we are concerned about the poor, but we don't make the lifestyle choices which prove we are.

-- And there are a few times when we say yes just to get someone off our backs. We treat God like the salesman who we tell to call back later, knowing well we won't be there to answer his call.

-- We don't know for sure which attitude the second son had, whether he had good intentions but poor follow up, or he was just getting his father off his back. We **do** know that he did not do his father's will.

-- And we know that he lived in a culture where keeping your honor was important....and keeping his honor meant saying Yes to his father. Saying No to someone in authority was a shameful thing.

-- Jesus challenged people in his culture to realize that it wasn't enough to talk a good game. We have to carry out God's will in what we actually do. And sometimes the less honorable people of his day did that better than the so-called respectable people.

- But Jesus' words have a message for those of us who live in a society that loves to expose hypocrites. He reminds us that doing God's will requires commitment and perseverance, not just good intentions.
- It's not enough to say we love our neighbor and do something nice on occasion. Love involves commitment over the long haul, and not just when people seem lovable.
- In fact, authentic love is best shown when the person we minister to is **not** very lovable at the moment. That's true even (perhaps especially true) when that person is a spouse or family member.
- We cannot do this merely by our own resolve or by our own efforts. We must call upon the one who emptied himself for our sake—Jesus Christ.
- Jesus is the one who combined the best qualities of the two brothers. He said he would do the Father's will, and he actually did it. The power of Jesus Christ will help us follow up on our good intentions so that they result in good actions.
- The good news is that no one is beyond the pale of God's help. Even the son who failed to do the will of the father can be brought back.
- Of course, the flip side is that we are free to turn away from God and will suffer the consequences of doing that. But God is not sitting there, just waiting for us to slide into sin.
- No, God is reaching out his hand to us continually, trying to bring us back to him. We need to reach out for God's hand. For none of us is perfect in following God's will.
- But, with his strength, we gain the strength to follow through on God's charge to us to love Him and to love one another. God will show us the way.