

SJM 8.30am, 1st Oct 2017 **How Will You be Judged?**
Ezekiel 18 v1-4, 25-32 **Phil 2 v1-13** **Matt 21 v23-32**

Apparently, God doesn't like this proverb: "The parents have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." He was quite clear in telling Ezekiel that the Israelites weren't to use it any more. The Israelites believed they were being punished for the sins of their ancestors – they lived a shared, corporate life which sometime rendered them fatalistic and unresponsive to God's generosity.

You may quote the bit in the 10 Commandments, Ex 20 v5: "punishing the children for the sins of the father" but Christian scholars teach that this verse means that the repeated behaviour (the fatalistic behaviour), mimicking the disobedience of ancestors is what leads to God's displeasure. Deuteronomy 24 v16: "Fathers shall not be put to death for their children nor children for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin."

Of course, we now live in the age of grace where our sins are covered by the blood of Christ – if we accept him. And we always have a choice which *can't be made for us*. Like the 2 brothers in the gospel reading: The one who says I'm not going to work in the vineyard but then does; and the 2nd son who, on the surface is the golden boy, faithful and obedient, but actually is lazy, deceitful – chose your own adjective. If you profess the Christian faith, live a Christian life!

Many people today say God (if indeed they believe in God) isn't fair. He condemns us. God doesn't. God is love. God is merciful and just. He *himself* has paid the price for our

shortcomings, our sins – all we have to do to keep hold of the receipt. Listen, God says, "I take no pleasure in the death of anyone" v32.

As Christians, we have this eternal promise and we should rejoice in it always. Don't say you are a Christian and then live as though you aren't – like the 2nd son because you will be caught out. And encourage, pray for those of your family, friends, acquaintances to come and meet the living, ever-loving creator. We can't bring them to faith or believe for them. We are not the substitute. They need to meet Jesus and claim him as their own and we can only help *reveal* the God who is already here, ready and waiting. "Turn, then and live" v32.