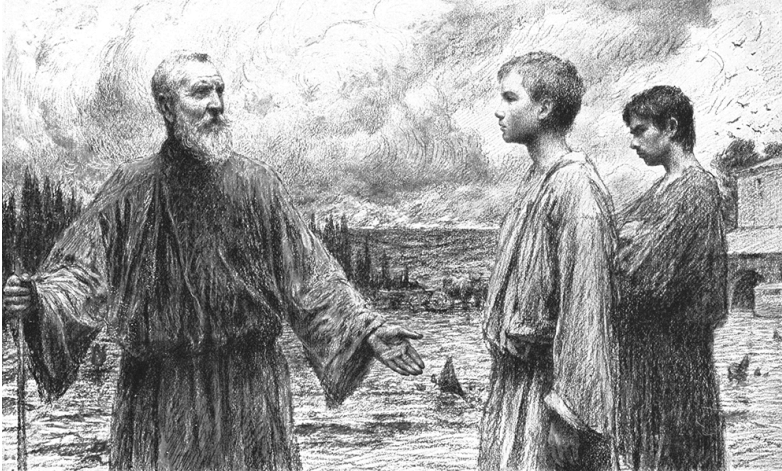


EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Cross of Christ Opens to Us the Way of Repentance to Life with God



Background: The Big Question: ***“Who cannot enter Heaven at the end of Time?”***
The answer: **All sinners EXCEPT those who trust in Christ as their Savior from sin. I pray that includes all of us. For it is the Blood of Christ that has redeemed us from sin.** No one is excluded from such trust, though many believe their own reason is superior to what God has done for us. It is totally logical. If our

Parable of the 2 Sons Eugène Burnand (1850–1921)

salvation depended on us, Just how much good would we have to do to pay for our sins? The answer can't be determined. That's why we needed the sinless Son of God to pay the price for our sin. That Christ was risen from the dead tells us God fully accepted Christ's sacrificial death on the cross. Thus we are saved by a living God, who will return on the last day to establish a new world where we will live with God in perfect harmony. Praise the Lord for sending the Holy Spirit to confirm this knowledge in our hearts.

The Lessons: Ezekiel 18:1–4, 25–32, Philippians 2:1–4 (5–13) 14–18, Matthew 21:23–27 (28–32)

The way of the Lord is righteous and just: *“The soul who sins shall die”* (Ezek. 18:4). However, because the Lord has *“no pleasure in the death of anyone”* (Ezek. 18:32), He calls sinners to repentance and faith in His gracious forgiveness of sins. The man who is thus turned away from his wickedness, who henceforth lives by the grace of God, *“shall surely live; he shall not die”* (Ezek. 18:28). This way of repentance has been opened for us by the cross of Christ. In the righteousness of faith and love, *“he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death”* (Phil. 2:8), and He was vindicated in His resurrection from the dead. Indeed, *“God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name”* (Phil. 2:9). He has given us this name in our Baptism into Christ, in whom we now *“shine as lights in the world”* (Phil. 2:15). He uses the authority that He has received from His Father (Matt. 21:23–27) to preach a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, by which even *“the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God”* (Matt. 21:31–32).