

An rfour.org Children's Time Message

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Written for October 1, 2023

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Lectionary Year A

Scripture: [Matthew 21:23-32](#) [**Summary:** *Jesus Does What He Says*]

Supplies Needed:

- You will need a soft-type of ball (foam is best) to throw
- You will need 2 adult volunteers from the congregation (they'll have to say a line or two, as well, so you'll probably want to pick people who are comfortable with a little over-acting).
- **Virtual note:** If you are giving this message virtually, consider telling a story of "imagine if we wanted a volunteer to be the congregation's catcher. And when two people tried out for the job, here's what happened...."

ASK (a.k.a [The On-Ramp](#))

- Good morning!
- I've decided that our church needs an official "catcher." I'm not really sure what they'll catch once they have the job, but I think it is important that they are able to catch things.
- I've asked two volunteers from the congregation to "try out" for us.
- For their try-out, they will tell us why we should pick them to be the official catcher for our church – and then I will throw a ball to them and they will show us how good they are at catching it.
- After watching and listening to them, our job is to pick the person who we think will do their best to catch the ball every time it is thrown to them.
- Are you ready to watch our volunteers try out for the official church catcher job!? (Yes!!!)
- Fantastic! So, first volunteer -- go ahead and tell us why you should be our official catcher.
- [Phrase that first volunteer says: "I'm the greatest catcher that has ever lived. You can only **wish** that you could be as good as me."]
- Ok, First Volunteer, that's quite a speech. Are you ready to show us how well you can catch a ball?
- [First volunteer (as instructed beforehand) should cross their arms at this point -- They might even continue in character with a "Born ready" type of comment]

- [*Throw ball (underhand) to first volunteer.*]
- [First volunteer should make absolutely no attempt to actually catch the ball. Keeps arms folded. Lets the ball hit them. Just stands there. Maybe says, "I'm the best" while the ball hits him/her.]
- Interesting. Ok, 2nd Volunteer -- go ahead and tell us why we should hire you as a catcher.
- [Phrase that second volunteer says -- "I have no idea! I'm no good at catching – someone else should do this!"]
- OK, Second Volunteer, that's also quite the speech. Are you ready to catch the ball?
- ["No! -- Not at all!"]
- [Throw the ball (underhand) to second volunteer – Second person **MUST** catch the ball. They can continue to make excuses about why they shouldn't be catching the ball while they catch it.]
- That was all very interesting. Thank you, dear volunteers, for trying out.
- [*Ask the children:*] So, who do you think we should choose to be our catcher? (most likely answer: *the second volunteer*)
- Why? (because he/she actually tried to **CATCH** the ball instead of just talking about it!)
- [Proclaim the second volunteer as the church's official catcher and thank them both, again, for helping out].

TELL (a.k.a. *The Freeway*)

- In today's scripture story, the Pharisees, who are the religious leaders in Jesus time and place, are asking Jesus why they should trust what he says to them and to others.
- Jesus doesn't answer their question. Instead he tells a story about a farmer who had two children.
- In the story Jesus tells, the farmer tells both kids, "Go work in the field." One says, "Of course. I will do so right away" but then does **not** do any work.
- The other child says, "I will **not** go work in the field" but then actually goes and works in the field.
- Those two kids sound a lot like our volunteer catchers, don't they? They say one thing, but do the other thing.
- Jesus tells this story for at least two reasons.
- The first reason is to let the Pharisees know that they can trust Jesus because of what he does.
- Jesus **ALSO** tells this story to let the Pharisees know that **they** need to do more than just talk, that their actions are just, if not more, important than their words.

SHARE the Good News (a.k.a. *The Destination*)

- There's a third type of person, of course, who isn't in Jesus' story.
- That third person says what they are going to do and then actually does what they said they would do.
- That's the type of person who Jesus is.
- Not only does Jesus use words to teach about God, but his actions teach about God, too, because his actions match his words.
- Jesus is the person who says, "I will go out and do work in the field" and then goes and works in the field.
- He's the one who says, "I'll do my best to catch the ball" and then he does his best to catch the ball.
- A lot of times, Jesus' actions help make his words make more sense.
- Which is why, when Jesus invites us to listen to him and follow him, we know that we can trust that he means the words he is telling us.
- And that's the Good News for today.
- Let's pray. This is a repeat-after-me prayer.

CLOSING Prayer

Dear God,

Dear God,

Thank you for Jesus...

Thank you for Jesus...

...who teaches us about you...

...who teaches us about you...

...and then actually does...

...and then actually does...

...what he teaches.

...what he teaches.

Thank you and Amen