Sermon from
September 27, 2026
Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Pastor Amy Vigesaa

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Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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A couple years ago, we bought a new couch. We had our other one for 20 years, and it served us well- it made it through kids jumping and spilling and throwing cushions on the ground to play hot lava. But it was time, so we bought a new couch- one of those L-shaped couches. This couch has not held up well- at all- but the one thing it has done, is draw people in. The lure of the couch is pretty strong in our house. There are a few spots that have deep impressions from a couple people who spend a lot of time there. Not going to throw anyone under the bus here, but… there are times when I will ask for one of my kids to unload the dishwasher or go mow the lawn, and they say they will but hours later it still hasn't been done and there they sit on the couch. There are times when I have to remind them of what they said yes to. There are times I have to reach for the glowing rectangle in their hand so they'll pay attention. There are times when I end up doing the work myself because it hasn't been done. Is this familiar to anyone? Or is it just my house? My authority and power seem to be lacking.

Our lesson from Philippians talks about the humility of Christ. It is a beautiful passage that speaks of Jesus surrendering his power and lowering himself, serving the will of God, bending to the will of those who put him on a cross. His "obedience to the point of death" is honored by God the Father, and Jesus is given the name that is above every name- the name LORD. He is given all authority and power, that at his name every knee will bend and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. That is our confession as people of faith. Jesus is Lord.

Because that is our confession, we are held to a way of life, that being a continual posture of saying Yes to the will of God. Our lives are to be shaped by a constant turning away from our will and turning toward God's. That's called repentance. It is a mental, spiritual, and sometimes physical movement away from what we desire and toward what Jesus desires. John Mark Comer writes that "the Christian life is not about mental agreement with beliefs, but about a whole-life transformation into the character of Jesus- learning to live the way Jesus lived." In our confession of Jesus as Lord we say Yes to that way of being, of following our Lord step by step into the way of love and peace and faithfulness and forgiveness and grace. All things we love the sound of, but don't always like the act of.

Jesus told a parable to the chief priests and the elders- people who held authority and power in temple, with the people, and in their society. They challenged his authority and in turn Jesus reminded them to Whom they were

bound; to Whom they were called to obey and their failure to do so. Karl Jacobson, former pastor, author and teacher, says in his commentary on this passage, "The parable sets up a comparison of two sons. One who says he will do what his father asks, but doesn't, with one who says he won't, but does. For every individual who hears this parable the comparison helps them (forces them) to ask the question, Which am I? Am I the son who presents himself as obedient while running around raising havoc, or am I the daughter who to all appearances is the "black sheep" but in the end does what is needed? Which am I? Which are you? There is an accusation in the parable — some who claim to obey the Father and observe the requirements of the Law fail, in actuality, to do so. Is this who we are, as believers, he asks — as pastors, teachers, church council members and Sunday school teachers? Which am I?"

The Good News is Jesus invites us to be co-workers with God. We- you and me- are invited to work in the vineyard of God, bearing good fruit for the sake of others, blessing the world through our obedience to God. That is a beautiful invitation for us, but often we receive it like the sons in this parable. As a chore. As something we don't want to do. At best we say no but grudgingly do it anyway, at worst we say yes but fail to ever do the work. We might have good intentions, but our words never turn to action. What makes us say no? What makes us say yes?

In life, no is a perfectly acceptable answer that many of us have trouble saying. If we don't know how to say no, our lives get crazy busy and overwhelming. We

take on too many things and can't seem to find a way out. This seems to be the way things are- constantly frazzled and exhausted. Many live like this, feeling like there is no other way, no choice but to continue in the design of cultural demands and never-ending pressure. No way off the hamster wheel of constant motion. No is a perfectly acceptable answer.

Yes is also a word thrown around- be Yes people! Meaning be open to what comes your way and let Yes be the word that comes out of your mouth in response. It might be the best thing. There was a movie that came out a few years ago called "Yes Day" where the parents have to say yes to whatever the kids want to do that day as a way to show they are fun people; as a way to live life again. So they roll down the windows going through the car wash and spend the afternoon playing paintball. Just say Yes -it might change your life. Sometimes, we need to say yes.

Both of these scenarios have more to do with what we want in life than what God wants for us. To say no to God is to miss the kingdom life. To say yes sometimes means doing what we don't want to do. If we're going to have a Yes Day, may it be every day saying Yes to God. But of course, we have to follow through. We have to go all in. Jesus points out in his parable that our words don't match our actions. We might say we are followers of Jesus- we go to church after all, but that's where it ends. Life on Monday doesn't look any different than before. Our lives don't look any different than our neighbors. Where's the transformation? How does this work anyway?

Amy Frykholm tells the story of a friend of hers. She says, "I have a new friend who spent most of his adult life in prison. I've only met him on the other side of this deep wilderness. 'My life now,' he says, 'is about doing the next right thing.' My new friend cannot count on the next right thing being the thing he most wants to do. He has to rely on a deeper sense of showing up anyway. I've observed in him a profound humility in his willingness to examine the present moment for the next right thing. He's following Carl Jung's injunction to "seek daily the will of God." What is the next right thing? What is the next act of kindness, the next movement toward reconciliation, the next step toward forgiveness, the next leap of generosity, the next stand of integrity, the next reach of love? These are the things God asks of us- will we say yes? And then, will we follow through?

Good intentions are just that: good intentions. They don't go any farther. Jesus is asking us to obey, to do the work, to take the next step. And I will be the first to admit that sometimes that is hard to do. We get distracted. Life gets busy. We get pulled in a different direction. We say yes to something else and out of default we say no to Jesus, our Lord. And then there are the times we simply don't want to do what God asks of us. "We have a particular resistance to the will of God." (Frykholm) Let me remind you, God loves you. You are still a son, a daughter, a child of God. God forgives. Jesus offers us grace and he will teach us the way. So, we keep turning again and again and again- away from our desires and toward God's desires; away from what we most want to do and toward the next right thing; away from our sin and toward the way of Jesus. We

practice. We pray. We follow. We take steps. And we learn from Jesus, our good teacher, and let him do a work in us as our Lord and Savior.

And perhaps we might consider a third way overlooked by this either/or language in our text. Maybe we can say yes, joyfully grab our sibling in Christ, and do the work together. Because that's what the body of Christ is for- working together to follow Jesus. Doing the hard things together. Saying yes and doing the work of Christ with each other- a work compelled by the love of Jesus. So we say Yes to Jesus, our Lord. And then, we go and do.

Amen