

Sunday, September 27, 2026 - 18th Sunday after Pentecost

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

1-3 - The word of the LORD came to me: What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"? As I live, says the Lord GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel.

Rather than assuming responsibility for the situation they were in, the Israelites were trying to blame those who came before them for the exile.

Do you ever find yourself not wanting to take responsibility but instead wanting to blame someone else?

What are some examples today of people's not wanting to take responsibility but instead wanting to blame someone else?

Ezekiel 18 eliminates the excuses of the children.

Exodus 20:5-6 gives a warning as well as a promise to the parents. These verses are part of the first commandment: You shall have no other gods before me.

I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of the parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Children do suffer because of the sins of their parents, and they are blessed because of the faith and godliness of their parents and grandparents.

I know so many children whose lives are deeply blessed because of the faith and godliness of their grandparents.

"To the third and the fourth generation" vs. "to the thousandth generation."
God would much rather bless than punish.

31-32 - Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord GOD. Turn, then, and live.

Cf. Ezekiel 33: 11 – from the First Reading for September 6

Psalms 51: 10 – Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

Psalms 25:1-9

7 - Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O LORD!

Makes me think of some of the really stupid things I did when I was younger, including during my youth director days during seminary.

Philippians 2:1-13

4 - Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

How do you do at looking to the interests of others – when they are the same as yours – when they are supportive of yours – when they are different from yours – when they are in conflict with yours?

5 - Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.

What would it mean to you to have the mind of Christ Jesus?

*"May the mind of Christ, my Savior, live in me from day to day.
By His love and power controlling all I do and say.
May the Word of God dwell richly in my heart from hour to hour
So that all may see I triumph only through His power.
May the peace of God my Father rule my life in ev'rything
That I may be calm to comfort sick and sorrowing.
May I run the race before me, strong and brave to face the foe,
Looking only unto Jesus as I onward go."*

*There is a basic, fundamental difference between Christianity and every other world religion.
Every other world religion tells us what we need to do to get up to God and/or to satisfy God.
Christianity tells us what God has done to come down to us.*

*The structure of Christ's humbling Himself and then being exalted is very similar to the structure
of the second article of the Apostles Creed.
Conceived by the Holy Spirit through descended into hell
Third day rose from the dead to sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty*

Because of its form, many think that these verses might have been an early Christian hymn.

6-8 -Though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

9-11 - Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Matthew 21:23-32

There are at least four different ways in which people respond to God. The second and third are pictured in the behavior of the sons in Jesus' parable whose father asked them to work in the vineyard.

1. NO - BOTH NOW AND LATER

2. YES NOW – NO LATER

3. NO NOW – YES LATER

Often it is these FIRST NO – THEN YES people who are among the most enthusiastic and dedicated, because they know the other side. They know the stakes are high. They know what it is like to be lost.

4. YES - BOTH NOW AND LATER

If you are among the YES – BOTH NOW AND LATER people, then thank God that you cannot remember a time in your life when you were lost.

Thank God that your faith journey has never involved a major detour in the wrong direction. Thank God, while also making sure that you do not fall into the trap of thinking that you are better and more loved by God because you have made your whole faith journey without any major mishaps or detours.