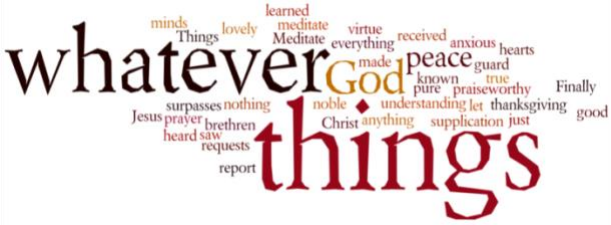

THINK ON THESE THINGS…..

Reading: Matthew 21:23-32

28 "What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.'
29 "'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.
30 "Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go.
31 "Which of the two did what his father wanted?"
"The first," they answered.
Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. **32** For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.

Reflection:

Cleansing the Temple was an act that was expected of the Messiah. The idea was that, when God's divine Messenger appeared, he would restore the worship of Israel to its former truth and power. So, when Jesus overturned the tables and chased out the corrupt merchants, it was like making a public claim to be the Messiah.

This is why the religious leaders confronted him about his authority. They wanted to know whether he really was claiming to be the Messiah. However, if he had answered directly, they would have used this against him. Jesus was wise enough to understand their agenda, and to turn the question back on them. In doing so, he revealed their resistance to God's work, and their fear of risking their lives and reputation on this new move of God.

But, then Jesus told a parable that showed how incredibly shocking God's grace really is. He revealed that it was not those who said or thought the right things that were experiencing God's Reign. It was those who embraced the new way of living and acting in the world. And it was the outcasts, the "sinners", the unclean people who were finding a way into God's new community. The religious leaders, who were invested in the status quo, were unable to respond to God's grace in this way, even though they spoke the right words.

Are there any places in your life where you're afraid of God's surprising grace? How can you open yourself to a new work of God, and also open yourself to those who are embracing it?

God is always doing new things - even sometimes through familiar situations and traditions. The challenge is for us to be open to recognise where God's grace is at work. This requires us to cultivate the habit of listening - to others, to our world, and to our own hearts - for the whisper of God's Spirit.

Breath-Prayer for Today: Lord God, as your surprising grace comes to me, teach me to listen and receive it.