

Yes, sir. No, sir.



In an ideal world, both sons would have said, 'certainly', when asked by their father to tend the vineyard.

In an ideal world, both sons would have then gone into the vineyard and done their bit to support the family by doing some work.

But we do not live in an ideal world, and Jesus knows it.

A worse kind of world would have had them both refusing and neither making an effort.

There are times when our world seems like that, and Jesus knows it.

The parable puts us in a world somewhere in between. It is a world that mixes good with bad, perfection with imperfection.

This is the world in which we live. And Jesus sees it and knows it.

There is a message here about recognising goodness. It can be seeing the good in others. The strange thing is that good can be found in the most unlikely people. It is not just about people; sometimes a situation that promises only pain and suffering brings to the surface heroism and sacrifice, mercy and compassion.

In a way the two sons are the same person – me – or you. One moment we are all smiles, with a willingness to fit in, and another we are irritable, refusing to co-operate. Jesus sees right through us, the fine words and the curses, the effort and the dishonesty.

He pointed out at the end of the parable that those who do things that are wrong are making their way into the kingdom of God. Are we to assume that they were doing so *because* they were doing wrong? No. It was because they heard the call of John – they thought better of their behaviour and chose to repent even if it was a struggle and sometimes they gave into temptation.

A father does not stop loving his children when they are grumpy and awkward. He doesn't stop loving them when they are all smiles even though they do bad things.

A parent's love is not measured out with conditions, nor reserved for those who do as they are told.

We are invited to do our bit and to work in the vineyard of the Lord.

It is wonderful when we do, and God loves us for trying.

It is not so good when we do not bother, and God loves us still.

