

- The Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Scribes, the chief Priests and the Elders – we could call these the Establishment. These were the enemies of Jesus. Each of these groups in their own way sought to preserve and protect Judaism. The Pharisees wanted to protect Judaism by bringing it more into family life and out of the Temple. The Sadducees wanted to protect traditional Jewish values and customs. The Elders were community leaders and judges who applied the Law. The Chief Priests were members of the Priestly families. The Scribes were the lawyers who interpreted Jewish Law. All of these saw Jesus of Nazareth as a threat.
- Before he ever spoke a word they decided they were against Him. As a consequence they put up their walls. They were prejudiced against Jesus. There was nothing that he had to say that they wanted to hear. They even wanted him dead. In today's gospel story Jesus speaks to the Chief Priests and the Elders of the people. These were people who mattered. Their good opinion mattered. Knowing how closed their minds were to Him, Jesus just wanted to put a crack in their wall. When the wall goes up I guess you have to hit it just a little bit harder. Jesus addresses his story to them.
- This is a story about two unruly spoiled rotten sons. These are not sons to be proud of. By implication, these are the children of the Establishment. These are not children who respect their parents. These are children who do the right things when it suits them and they do the wrong thing when it suits them. As soon as the Chief Priests and the Elders engage with Jesus, He comes at them with this: Tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you. That is a terrible insulting thing to say to the elite of society. These people have devoted their whole lives to the preservation of Jewish society and values. I guess even the Divine Jesus got fed up sometimes.
- Jesus went on to challenge them even more: John came to you in the way of righteousness and you still did not budge. Even tax collectors and prostitutes believed him. That is another terrible insulting thing to say. Clearly Jesus is exasperated with them. They hide behind a wall. They have closed their ears and minds. They interpret the Law always to suit their arguments. There is no debate. There is no discussion. We are the ones who call the shots around here and we will tell you what you will do, and what you will think and what you will say.
- In the world in which we live we deal with that all the time. Right now our society is deep in political debate about all kinds of things. Before we start, because you are not on the same side as me, I have decided that you are wrong and I am right. I am never wrong. People come to the debate from both sides and both sides are righteous. They are decent people. They are honorable, kind, and good. In the world of debate and dialogue none of

that matters to me. All that matters to me is that I score points for my party and I get to belittle yours.

- These are not any two sons to be proud of. You don't get to decide, "I will do the right thing when I feel like it." Doing the right thing is doing the right thing. Being honorable is being honorable. Being righteous, being right living is right living. Don't bring politics and prejudice into it.
- It is no wonder we can't come together. We are all trying to score points against the other side. Let us imagine an ideal situation. How about Jesus sits down with the Establishment and they begin with mutual respect. Then they have a discussion about ideas. Together they come to consensus. Let us all come together for the good of our society. Bickering and fighting is great fun, but it is not helping. If you don't want to be part of the solution, at least stop being part of the problem.