



Advent Reflection

Day #17

Tuesday, December 15

Zephaniah: 3:1-2, 9-13; Matthew 21:28-32

Appearance was always a topic of conversation in my home growing up. My mom – a proud southerner – would not dare leave the house without “her face on”, and when my brother and I were children we had more than one argument with her about getting “dressed properly” to go out (even to go to the doctor when we had the flu!). My mom is one of the most loving and kindhearted people I know, and she would never judge someone based on their appearance. However, she has very strong feelings about her family’s appearance. In her view, one’s appearance is the manifestation of who one is, and everything from wrinkly clothes to worn out shoes to tattoos and piercings are an indication of lack of respect for one’s self, one’s family, and the people you are going to see.

We laugh about it now – I have broken a few of those rules and turned out fine! – But it begs the question: when did character and appearance become synonymous? To her, appearance is a sign of respect – which you cared enough about the people you are meeting to present yourself in a favorable way. I am a millennial, so while we disagree on some of her “rules” I do not disagree with her sentiment. What it boils down to is the belief that one judges you by the superficial rather than your character. That is the crux of this parable: the people who appear to be doing the right thing like the first son and the chief priests are the hypocrites and the second son, the tax collectors, and the prostitutes are the ones with good hearts.

As I read these passages, I ask myself when I have judged others based on the superficial. How can I really know their hearts based on how they look? Jesus could see past the professions and appearances of those who crossed his path, and I should try to do the same.