

The Authority of Jesus Questioned

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[0 : 0 0] just as we go there again let's pray our Father we thank you for your word we thank you that we are able to open up this word that has been inspired by the Holy Spirit and we pray for the help of the Holy Spirit in preaching and listening and responding open our eyes unblock our ears help us we pray to see and to hear Jesus and we ask Lord that you would press into our hearts that we would know that you are addressing us personally and Lord we pray that our responses would be responses that are faith filled and will bring glory to your name we pray for each of us Lord here in this place you know us you know our needs you know where we are spiritually whether we are lost or whether we are found whether we are close to you or whether we are we are drifting and we ask Father that you would meet with us and that you would call us to yourself we pray for others you meet as we do we think of Donnie in the

Church of Scotland at present we ask that you would bless him Lord and speak through him we pray for all the congregations around us and we ask Lord that you would be speaking through your word through each of your servants we pray for those who would desire to be with us this morning but who are unable to be here some who are sick some who are going through treatment some who are in hospital and care homes some who are in their own homes and who are not strong enough to be able to come out and we ask that you would minister to them where they are and for those Lord in particular need who my minds go to even in these moments those who are grieving those who are struggling with different difficult things in life we thank you that we are able to bring them to you in prayer even as we name them within our own hearts at this time and we ask Lord that you would help them Lord because you are the God who is full of compassion so hear our prayers and help us we pray now as we bow before you in Jesus name

Amen We stood in Edinburgh in the early part of last week and I went out for a curry one evening with a friend of mine Ewan in the Gilvery who is often here Dustboy as the children know him in the holiday club and it was a very quiet restaurant just ourselves and there was a family just next to us there was three generations of the family grandchildren parents and there was two fairly unruly little children and the parents and the grandparents were both trying to get these children to sit at the table and they were fighting a losing battle because the more they tried to tell them and the more they tried to restrain them the more these children just stubbornly refused and it reminded me of a story which I've heard told a number of times about a similar situation with a wee boy in a cafe and his parents say to him as he's squirming and making a scene at the table sit down and the wee boy says no I'm not sitting down and he's standing up sit down no I won't sit down and he's standing up and the rest of his dad gets hold of him and puts him in the chair and straps him in and clicks the thing in and he's got no choice he has to sit down and in a range the wee boy is said to his father and mother

I might be sitting down on the outside but I'm standing up on the inside from a young age we don't have to be taught this we don't like authority and that doesn't change whether we are parents or grandparents we still don't like people telling us what to do we don't like people being over us and at the end of Mark chapter 11 going into Mark chapter 12 it is very clear that the chief priests and the teachers of the law and the elders they did not like they would not have this Jesus over them and that comes through very strongly in the question that they ask first point today is a question of authority a question of authority that we note within these verses it says in verse 27 they arrived again in

Jerusalem that's Jesus and his disciples and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts the chief priests the teachers of the law and the elders came to him by what authority are you doing these things they asked and who gave you authority to do this now what things were the elders and the chief priests and the teachers of the law talking about why were their noses so out of joint to get the

answer to that question we just have to think back a week or if we went here last week just glance back through the last few verses verses 15 to verse 18 of Mark chapter 11 we see Jesus and we see Jesus causing a disturbance in the temple it's one of my favorite scenes actually in the gospels we have this very effeminate view of what Jesus is like as far as our culture has taught us but in the gospels we see Jesus on a number of occasions going as far as to cause a disturbance when necessary he was a man a tradesman and he was a man who was not afraid to speak when he was required to speak and in verses 15 to 18 we have this scene this disturbance that Jesus caused the temple is the place where this happened and the temple was the place where the chief priests and the teachers of the law and the elders that was the place they flexed their religious muscles they were the ones in that place who called the shots they were the ones who had set the rules that governed what was permissible and what was not permissible within the temple and yet [7:06] Jesus when he comes into the temple and he looks around everything Jesus determines that what he sees is far from acceptable when he saw the daylight robbery and the hypocrisy that was going on in the name of his father he was angry it says in verse 15 on reaching Jerusalem Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there he overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts and as he taught them he said is it not written my house will be called a house of prayer to all nations but you have made it a den of robbers and that disturbance angered these religious people rather than taking a step back and having a look at themselves rather than listening to the voice of the son of

God the king and head of the church rather than repenting and seeking forgiveness for the son that they had brought into the temple they became more and more furious with Jesus the chief priest verse 18 and the teachers of the law heard this when they heard this they began looking for a way to kill him these were the things that they were objecting to so when they came with their question by what authority do you do these things who gave you authority to do this they weren't actually looking for an answer in any way shape or form they were just simply venting their rage they were looking for grounds to accuse and incriminate

Jesus through the response that he might make and that's why Jesus when he's questioned he doesn't answer them he answers their question with a question and we can see that in verses 29 to verse 33 I'm not going to go into that today but we see Jesus very wisely there taking the question and answering that question with another question he knows at this point they want him dead and yet Jesus knows the time is not quite right yet he's not quite yet ready to go to the cross and so rather than speaking explicitly he outsmarts them because he knows that in their hearts they simply were not willing to bow to the authority of Jesus and you know the authority of Jesus was not something that was limited to the temple courts back there and then you read about an account that happened in history 2000 years ago but this is not a scene that's locked in history and has relevance only back for that time the authority of Jesus is something that applies to every age and every place

Jesus is king and Jesus is head of his church always and forever we don't get to run the church any way we like that the elders will meet tomorrow evening the elders in making decisions must always make decisions with a bible opener asking the question what is it that Jesus says we do and what is it that Jesus says that we don't do we don't get to revise and update the message of the gospel to fit the changing trends of different generations and cultures and fashions we have not been given that authority and we must dare not take it but you know we can press this application a bit further because when we're talking about the authority of

Jesus we're not just talking about the temple as in the church this is an authority that awaits to each of our lives the temple of our bodies Paul in first Corinthians six verses nineteen and twenty reminds us that the one who rules over each one of our lives is Christ do you not know says the apostle Paul that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom you have received from God you are not your own that's a word our culture needs to learn to a word but each one of us needs to learn you are not your own you were bought at a price therefore honour God with your body your chief end and my chief end is not to exalt ourselves it's not to be all we can be it's to glorify God and we know that to do so brings the joy that is eternal we are under the authority of Christ and the question that I must face as you must face this morning is how are we responding to the authority of Jesus maybe some people here today you're in church but you're not actually believers there might be some people say well you can see that I don't believe in

[14 : 03] Jesus I don't believe that I'm under the authority of Christ I used to believe that but not so much I know that actually has very little relevance to anything because whether we believe it or not we are still under the authority of Christ there may be people who say I'm an atheist and I don't believe in God well God doesn't believe in atheists just because we believe something doesn't make it true there is objective reality there is a God whom some people will spend their whole lives denying the existence of and yet one day they will stand before him and he will show himself in a way that we will no longer be able to argue with that he is the authority over their lives and their eternity so the question for us today is how are we responding to the authority of Christ because sometimes he bursts into our lives in a similar fashion to the way he burst into the temple sometimes

Christ comes gently and he whispers into our ears and sometimes Jesus comes into our lives and he drives out forcefully the sins that we have allowed to live within us sometimes Jesus comes at us and he kicks over a few tables for we have been around idols to gather sometimes we come to church and we get a word of comfort sometimes we come to church and we hear a word of rebuke from scripture that jars us sometimes Jesus comes to us as he came to the people in the temple back there and then and he has every right to do it because he is the one who is in authority over every aspect of our lives the question is how will we respond to that what should we do when Jesus comes at us in this way but what we should not do is what these religious people did rather we should repent we should submit to him whilst we have time in this world we should seek his forgiveness and buy before him a question of authority is the first point second point is a question of accountability

James in chapter 1 talks about the bible being like a mirror we open God's word and we see a reflection of our own hearts God shows us what we need to see and here Jesus he tells a parable what's a parable a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning and Jesus tells this parable he speaks God's word it has echoes of Isaiah 5 in it which you can go and look at later we're not going to look at it just now and he holds the scriptures up before him and he's showing him a picture of themselves in this parable Jesus then began to speak in parables verse 1 a man planted a vineyard he put a wall around it dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower and he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey it's important when we look at a parable to understand who's who in the parable so we get the man and the man who builds the infrastructure around the vineyard is God and the farmers who are entrusted to care for the vineyard who are rented out this vineyard are God's people

Israel and the people listening to this would have understood that so far so good they knew that they recognised themselves in this parable and there was nothing that would have upset them up until this point nothing controversial but then this parable starts to twist and turn it takes on a direction that they didn't expect at harvest time verse 2 he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard but they seized him beat him and sent him away empty handed he sent another servant to them they struck this man in the head and treated him shamefully he sent still another and that one they killed he sent many others some of them they beat others they killed and as Jesus is telling this what he's doing in five sentences is to encapsulate centuries of

Jewish history just as the owner of the vineyard expected to enjoy the fruit of the vine that was his legal right as the owner of the vineyard God expected his people Israel to be fruitful he commanded them to go and be fruitful he expected them to be faithful people in light of the way that he was treating them with such consistent loving faithfulness God expected his people he commanded his people to bring glory to his name to be a light for the Gentiles but as God waited for that fruit to come from his people it didn't come and so he sent prophet after prophet we have the collection of them in the Old Testament prophet after prophet was sent to his people to remind them of their accountability to him because they were so quick to forget but Israel wouldn't listen and Israel as a nation

[21 : 25] God's people they treated the prophets of God shamefully he would not have them Elijah for example when he brought God's word he was driven out into the wilderness it's a lot like what we are seeing today God's word used to be such an integral part in our culture anybody who brings it now is driven out Zechariah another prophet stoned to death Jeremiah spoke God's truth beating spatter placed in the stocks eventually killed by the sword Uriah killed by the sword

Isaiah of tradition tells us that he was slain in two eventually John the Baptist the greatest preacher of all as Jesus said the last of the prophets before Christ beheaded and then after all that God sent his own son Jesus verse 6 he had one left to send a son whom he loved he sent him last of all saying they will respect my son but the tenants said to one another this is the heir come let's kill him and the inheritance will be ours so they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard and the scribes and the pharisees the teachers of the law chief priests as they swarmed in their seats knew that's exactly what they were plotting to do with Jesus as the mirror of

God's world was being held up for their faces they could see themselves Martin Luther the great reformer said in light of this parable this picture of God and his people and the way that his people were rebelling against him Martin Luther says if I were God and the world had treated me as it treated him I would kick the wretched thing to pieces if I were God says Luther and the world had treated me as it treated him I would kick the wretched thing to pieces I think we would say the same thing if we were God and we were treated as badly as he has been treated by his people through generations up to the present tense what would we do

Derek Thomas says we would send in the marines get the bazookas ready blast these rebellious people off the face of the earth that's what we would do what does God do he calls us still to trust him you know it's an amazing thing to think about even as Jesus told this parable to a people whom he knew were plotting his death he was giving him the chance to repent turn to him and all these years later as we can cite offence after offence against

God through world history from our hearts God is still giving us the opportunity to receive his grace the word our God is gracious we sang compassionate he is also in mercy he is plenteous but unto wrath and anger slow and the fact that we are still sitting here we haven't as a people been blasted off the face of the earth it's evidence of that fact the grace the patience the compassion of God and this morning we have the chance to trust him can I urge you this morning if you're hearing this and haven't yet trusted

[27 : 29] Christ trust him receive the grace of God why well because with God's grace received you and I are saved from our sins we are cleansed from all our sins we have a place in heaven we have a friend who sticks closer than a brother we have a heavenly father who cares for all our needs we have the Holy Spirit who has given to us that's what we receive when we receive the grace of Jesus but if we will not receive the grace of Jesus when we stand before God to give an account of how we have lived our lives and what we have done with his son we will have no hope there will be no deals done there will be no more time for mercy there will be no opportunity for grace there will be no escape in the wrath of

God and that's actually the solemn warning that this parable ends with it's a question of authority it's a question of accountability and finally there's the question of eternity that's where Jesus goes as the parable comes to an end the question he deals with in conclusion is a question of what the owner of the vineyard will do with this wicked people it's a question of what will God ultimately do with these people who have persistently rejected him what will he do with these people who have refused time and time and time and time again to bow to the authority of Jesus what will he do with these people who when the grace of

God has been offered time after time fold their arms and turn away what then says Jesus in light of all the tragedy of what's gone past what then will the owner of the vineyard do how does this story end I think that's a question that we left hanging for a for a moment and took out to the streets with a microphone I think we might get a different answer to the answer that Jesus has given here I think if we were to go out on the streets as you see people in Edinburgh and Glasgow their clipboards they're wanting answers to your questions I think if we were to go out and say in light of this parable what is it that God is going to do here's the story it's this rejection time and time and time and time again a people that seek the first of

God a people that turn away from God when it comes to this point what will God do we don't have the rest of this parable he said to the man in the street how does this end I think he would say well God will let them all off God will forgive because that's God's job that's what he does he forgives everybody always now people in our culture I think have this corrupted idea of a soft touch God who turns a blind eye to sin and who ultimately lets everyone into heaven in the end that's what people think that's the misguided idea that most people have of

God but that's not true that's the devil's lie that's what he wants us to believe what does Jesus say verse nine what then will the owner of the vineyard do he will come and kill those tenants that give

and give the vineyard to others haven't you read this scripture the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone the world has done this and it's marvelous in our eyes and put simply just to try to conclude this the central message here the central message here is that those who reject [33 : 06] Jesus ultimately and eternally will be rejected by Jesus and to be rejected by Jesus who is the life is to face the prospect of the second death which is hell now the parable you could say it's an expanded version of of psalm 2 psalm 2 you are given a picture of the whole world uniting against God what does God say in that psalm he says kiss the son lest he be angry with you and you be destroyed in your way for his wrath can flare up in a moment blessed are all who take refuge in him God has made very clear in scripture his terms and conditions of salvation and we can say without any doubt or confusion those who bow the knee and confess

Christ as Lord will be saved and equally clearly we can say that those who reject him and who seek to remain the authority of their own lives and have no question of their accountability to God they will be lost it's as crystal clear as that and that clarity was coming through in this parable that Jesus told so how would the chief priests and the teachers of the law and the elders respond to such a strong clear message and they knew it was a message for them verse 12 tells us that they knew as they plotted to kill

Jesus that he was speaking against them so surely we say as they see themselves in the scripture surely they'll reconsider their position and come to Christ and seek forgiveness but sadly the answer is not that then they verse 12 looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them I wonder as I finish is Jesus speaking this parable against some of us who are here today it's Jesus speaking this parable against some who have up until now rejected the authority of

Christ remember these people were the most religious the best read in scripture these were the pillars of the community as far as society was concerned these were the ones that everybody thought were okay and yet Jesus could see their hearts he could see in spite of all the religious guard that they were clothed in they were still refusing his grace and so he spoke this parable against them is he speaking it against us and if he is let's not make the mistake that they made rather let us fall on our knees before

Christ and whilst there is time receive his amazing grace let's pray our father we thank you for the amazing grace that we are about to sing about we think about the whole idea of grace when we deserve the worst in Christ you have offered us the best and as the scriptures are held up to us today we know that we are those who sin we are those who have turned against you many times and we pray that if there is anyone here today who is still turning against

[38 : 53] Christ who is still refusing to bow the knee who is still refusing to accept the grace that is offered we pray that you would break through that rebellion and Lord whilst there is time they would see their need that they would see the marvel of Christ and that they would receive him as we pray that each one of us would receive Jesus and we ask this in Jesus name Amen we sing