

Gospel of Mark: Jesus Authority v My Authority

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[0 : 00] Thanks very much, Graham. It's the shortest of the Gospels. It's an eyewitness account of the life of Jesus Christ, really focusing in on the last three years of his life, and in particular from chapter 11 to chapter 16. It's really just the last week of Jesus' life before he dies. So at least a third of the book is taken up with the death of Jesus and his heading towards that. So we're going to be looking at the section that was just read to us, Mark chapter 11, verse 27 to 12, verse 17.

So, who is the boss? Who do you think is in charge? Well, the results of the referendum tell us that it's a shared authority between the Dáil and the Shannad. I'm not sure how you voted. If you want to know how I voted, you can ask me later. But I think the real issue in this big debate has been who gets to hold the power? Who's going to be the ones in charge? Are we happy to give all the power to one house, the Dáil, or will it be better if it is shared? Well, whatever the debate, no one likes one person to have all the authority. And I think if we're honest with ourselves, we want to maintain a certain amount of authority over our own lives. We don't want anybody telling us what to do. Now, the question of authority is one that is facing Jesus and us in the passage we had read to us. Look at verse 27 again.

They, that's Jesus and his disciples, arrived again in Jerusalem. It's now only five days till his death. And while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the highest place of authority, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders, the highest people in authority, came to him. By what authority are you doing these things? They asked. And who gave you authority to do this? Well, what had Jesus done? Well, remember what he had done the day before. Go back to chapter 11, verse 15. Chapter 11, verse 15.

[2 : 55] On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and he began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves.

And he wouldn't allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. Now, the shock value of Jesus' actions here would be like you or I blocking the way into Leinster House and claiming that I, or you, replaced the shannad and the door.

Who are you? Or who am I to claim such authority? Well, through his actions, Jesus was claiming authority over the temple and its leaders.

In verse 27, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders, they together made up this governing body, in some ways like a doll, except for they were called the Sanhedrin.

And they would have met together in the temple courts. They were the authority amongst the people, socially, religiously and politically.

[4 : 10] And now Jesus comes into the middle of them all, claiming authority over them. By his actions, he was saying, I am here to replace the temple.

I am here to replace you as the true leader. I am the one with absolute power and supreme authority.

And the shock value for us? Well, Jesus claims the same absolute authority over my life and over your life.

Well, how could he make such an outrageous statement? Well, first, the source of Jesus' authority. Look at verse 28 again.

By what authority are you doing these things, they asked. And who gave you the authority to do this? Well, Jesus, holding his position of authority, replied in verse 29.

[5 : 14] I will ask you one question. Answer me and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. John's baptism. Was it from heaven or was it from man?

Tell me. Was the source God or was the source man? Well, keep your finger there in chapter 11 and go back to the very beginning of Mark's gospel, to chapter 1, verse 9. And here we have an account of John's baptism as Jesus was baptised. Mark, chapter 1 and verse 9. So was the baptism from God or was it from man? At that time, verse 9, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven. You are my son, whom I love. With you I am well pleased. [6:36] This was God's public declaration of who Jesus is. It was an announcement. The voice from heaven. God's audible voice.

You are my son. It's telling us that Jesus was not only sent by God, but that Jesus came with God's authority.

So the source of Jesus' authority is from God. In other words, Jesus' authority is God's authority. Now that shouldn't come as any surprise to us. If you've read through the book of Mark, you would have seen that Jesus showed his authority by healing the sick with just a touch.

He controlled storms by just a word. He proved his authority by raising a little girl from the dead. And by telling people their sins were forgiven.

[7:41] All of which only God could do. And now Jesus is doing it. But here, back in chapter 11, it gets even more personal.

Because Jesus is claiming authority not just over sickness and over nature. He's claiming authority over people. He claims authority over my life and over your life.

The crowds who had witnessed the baptism of Jesus, well, they were in no doubt at all. They had seen it and they had heard it. They knew that Jesus came with God's authority.

But that's what the Sanhedrin, the leaders, were afraid of. Look at verse 31. They discussed it among themselves and they said, if we say from heaven, if we say the source of authority was from God, then he'll ask, why didn't you believe him?

Why didn't you believe everything that John had to say about Jesus? But if we say it was from men, it was all made up, they feared the people for everyone held that John really was a prophet.

[8:59] You see, the Sanhedrin, if they admitted that the source of Jesus' authority was from God, then they would have to submit to him and bow the knee to him, something they and we find very hard to do.

So second, the rejection of Jesus' authority. How are they going to respond? How are we going to respond to Jesus' claim that he has authority?

Well, let's read on. Chapter 12, verse 1. He then began to speak to them in parables, in a story with a meaning. And let's remember who this parable is for.

We're told in verse 12 who this parable is for. Chapter 12, verse 12. They looked for a way to arrest Jesus because they knew he had spoken the parable against them.

In fact, this story that Jesus tells is as much about us as it is about them. Jesus is showing us through the story how we reject his authority.

[10:15] So let's take a look at this story together. Chapter 12, verse 1. A man planted a vineyard. He put a big wall around it and he dug a pit for the wine press.

And then he built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers. And he went away on a journey. And of course, as the story goes on, we see that when it came to the harvest time to pick the grapes, the landowner sent one of his servants to collect some of the produce.

But instead of getting the produce, the farmers took him and they beat him up. Look at verse 5. He sent still another. And that one they killed.

He sent many others. Some of them they beat up. And others they killed. Everyone that came. Everyone that was sent by the owner, they rejected and ignored.

Finally, 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.

[11:30] But the tenants said to one another, Look, this is the heir. Come, let's kill him and then the inheritance will be ours. So they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.

It's not very difficult to see the point Jesus is making, is it? In the story we have the farmers. And their aim is to get rid of the son.

So that they can own the property. And then they become the ones in charge of the vineyard. They become the boss. And this is what Jesus is saying to these leaders.

He's saying to them, Can you see? You want to get rid of me. You want to kill me. The true son of God. So that you become the ones in charge.

Then you will be the ones who have all authority. Well, of course, this was nothing new. This had been the story of Israel throughout their history.

[12:38] God throughout time had kept sending his prophets. One after the other. Who kept speaking God's word to them. But they kept rejecting it. Don't want it.

Didn't want to listen. And now they reject Jesus. God's final and ultimate word. But let's not lose the focus here.

Because this is also our story. Because we're to see ourselves in this story as the farmers. You see, Jesus still exercises his authority over us through his word, the Bible.

He is now risen. He reigns in the heavens. And he now exercises his authority over us through his word, the Bible. So let me ask this question for us all.

What is our attitude to God's word? To this book, to this Bible? Because how we treat the Bible is how we treat the authority of Jesus.

[13:48] Maybe you think the Bible is irrelevant. Maybe you think it's outdated. Maybe you think it's too restrictive. Maybe it encroaches on your freedoms.

So you just simply don't bother with it. Well, maybe you believe it's actually true. And you say, yep, this is a true account. But you just don't read it very much.

Maybe once a week. Maybe a month. Maybe not at all. Perhaps you do read it. But as you read it, we're always thinking, this will be good for that person.

So as you read through it, you're going along and you're thinking, oh, that's interesting. I wonder why they didn't read it. Because that would be really good for them. You see, to ignore God's word is to ignore Jesus.

To take God's word, the Bible, and literally to shut it up, is to tell Jesus to shut up.

[15:06] To push the teaching of his word out of our lives, is to put Jesus out of our lives. You see, this whole story in Mark's gospel is to tell us that we're really no better than the farmers in the story.

Who said, let's kill him. Let's get rid of Jesus. Let's get rid of Jesus. And then I will be the authority. You see, whoever we are, we all reject the authority of Jesus. Jesus. But his authority still stands. And he has proved his authority, which is our third point. Look at verse 9 of chapter 12. What then will the owner of the vineyard do?

He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. You see, we might try to remove Jesus. We might try to reject his authority. But he is still the one who has supreme authority over us.

[16:25] Verse 10. Haven't you read this scripture? The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone. Now, they all knew the stone that Jesus was talking about.

It was the stone in the temple. The builders had disregarded it. They thought it was of no use. But it actually turned out to be the most important stone in the building.

Take it away and the whole building would collapse. Now, with that thought in mind, remember what Jesus had been saying about himself all the way along.

Go back to chapter 8, verse 31. Chapter 8, verse 31. Remember what Jesus had been saying would happen to him.

Chapter 8, verse 31. Jesus then began to teach his disciples that the Son of Man, that's Jesus, must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.

[17:50] Now, go back to chapter 12. You see, what Jesus is saying to them here with this quote, the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.

He's saying, I'm like that stone. You have rejected me. You are even going to kill me. But three days later, I'm going to rise again from the dead.

I'm like the capstone. You think by killing me you get rid of me. But by my resurrection from the dead, I prove my authority over you.

Remove me and your whole life, your world will collapse. Verse 11.

The Lord has done this and it is marvellous in our eyes. The rejection of Jesus, the death of the true Son, becomes proof of his authority as he rises from the dead.

[18 : 51] The rejection of Jesus meant he becomes the champion, the one who is over all. The Lord has done all of this. He managed to put this plan in place.

Now, like the leaders, we can stand in judgment over Jesus and we can want to accuse him. But he is the risen Lord who will come to judge each one of us.

Because that is what he will do. He will come again one day and he will judge us. In fact, the way we treat Jesus is the way he will treat us in judgment.

If we reject him now, he will reject us then. We will be shut out. We will suffer hell. So, the proof is there that Jesus is in authority.

So, what are we going to do about it? Well, number four, the response to Jesus' authority. Look at verse 13.

[20 : 02] Later, they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians, others who had positions of authority. They sent them to Jesus to catch him in his words.

Because they still were not accepting his authority. They were still rejecting it. Verse 14. They came to him and said, Teacher, we know you're a man of integrity.

Lick, lick. You aren't swayed by men because you pay no attention to who they are. But you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?

Should we pay or shouldn't we pay? Now, this is a very, very clever question. Because if Jesus says, yes, pay taxes to Caesar, pay your taxes to Rome, then they knew the crowds would all turn against Jesus because they didn't like Roman rule.

They didn't want to be paying taxes to them. And if Jesus said, yes, they'd lynch him. If Jesus said, no, don't pay taxes to Rome, don't give your money to Caesar, well, then they knew that the authorities would find out and they would put Jesus away.

[21 : 30] So either answer, if Jesus said yes or no, Jesus is going to find himself in unwanted trouble. Both answers could actually get him killed. But, look at the rest of verse 15, Jesus knew their hypocrisy.

Why are you trying to trap me? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it. Bring me one of those coins. A denarius was simply the same amount of what you would pay in a day's tax to Caesar.

Verse 16, So they brought the coin and he asked them, whose portrait or whose image is in it?

And whose inscription is written on it? Well, we can imagine them taking the coin and looking at it very carefully and they would see that the image was Caesar's.

And they'd flick it over and they'd see on the other side this inscription, Caesar Augustus, son of the divine Augustus. End of verse 16, Caesar's, they replied.

[22 : 43] It belongs to him. It's his image. It's got his words written on it. Verse 17, Then Jesus said to them, Well, give to Caesar's what Caesar's, and give to God's what is God's.

Look, he says, give it to Caesar. Give that coin to Caesar because his name and image is on it. It belongs to him. But you, you bear the image of God.

Remember Genesis, chapter 1, verse 27, I have it on the screen there. God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him.

Male and female, he created them. He's saying to them, you were created by God. You are his design.

His name is on you. So give to God's, what is God's? Your life. You know, all the implements and things that we have in our house, if you turn them upside down, it's got a little label and it will say, Made in.

[24 : 00] All my little toys used to say, Made in Taiwan. I don't know if they still have Taiwan or if they make toys in Taiwan anymore. But everything is made somewhere. It's got an identity.

Well, in some ways, if we turn ourselves upside down, stamped across us, is God's name. God's image has been ingrained in us.

Yes, it is a broken and a distorted image, but we belong to him. We are his. He owns us. So give to God's, what is God's.

Submit to his authority. Surrender your life to him. Let his word soak into our lives, shaping us and transforming us so that broken image would be transformed into the likeness of Christ.

We find submitting to authority very difficult. We don't like to give our lives in surrender to anyone. But let me show you why we can and why we should.

[25 : 15] Here's why we can submit to his authority. Remember the story Jesus told. Go back to verse 6 of chapter 12. See what it says there?

The owner had one left to send. A son whom he loved. He sent him last of all saying they will respect my son.

What did they do? Verse 8. They took him and they killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. You see Jesus is talking about himself in this story. Jesus is God's beloved son who was killed. But his death on the cross was a death in place of you and for me. When Jesus was put to death on the cross he was taking my punishment, your punishment for rejecting his authority.

[26 : 23] for pushing him out of our lives Jesus took the blame for us. You see Jesus is not some tyrant or some dictator who abuses his authority.

Some kind of vindictive bully who starts pointing fingers and saying do this, do that and do it all for me. No, Jesus used his authority to serve us by dying for us.

And at the heart of this story is this very simple message that Jesus was treated as you and I deserve to be treated so that we might be treated as Jesus deserves to be treated.

He took the blame for rejecting his authority so that we might live with him that we might belong to him that we might live under his good and perfect rule in his kingdom.

You see if Jesus is so generous if Jesus is so gracious if he is so good if he would give his life for you then why would we not want to submit to his authority?

[27 : 43] Why would we not want to let his word soak into our lives to restore you and renew you to be the kind of people he calls us to be?

His authority is a good authority. We should submit to it as he gave his life for us. Let's pray. Father, I need to follow to him out