

Mark 11:27–12:12

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[0:00] Mark chapter 11, beginning with verse 27. And they came again to Jerusalem.

! And as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him. And they said to him, by what authority are you doing these things?

Or who gave you this authority to do them? Jesus said to them, I will ask you one question. Answer me and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.

Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me. And they discussed it with one another, saying, if we say from heaven, he will say, why then did you not believe him?

But shall we say from man? They were afraid of the people, for they all held that John really was a prophet. So they answered Jesus, we do not know. And Jesus said to them, neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

[1:09] And he began to speak to them in parables. A man planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a pit for the wine press and built a tower.

And leased it to the tenants and went into another country. When the season came, he sent a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard.

And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again, he sent to them another servant. And they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully.

And he sent another, and him they killed. And so with many others, some they beat and some they killed. He had still one other, a beloved son.

Finally, he sent him to them, saying, they will respect my son. But those tenants said to one another, this is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.

[2:09] And they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.

Have you not read this scripture? The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

They were seeking to arrest him, but feared the people, for they perceived that he had told the parable against them. So they left him and went away. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. You may be seated. What's your take on Jesus?

And what does Jesus say is at stake for you? What's your take on him? And what does he say is at stake for you?

[3:13] As we open the fall together, I want to just remind us that making up our own minds, or for you, making up your mind on Jesus is worth the investment of your time.

This might be one of the only hours in the week that these considerations will be put before you in ways that allow you to think clearly about what you make of Jesus.

After all, Jesus is perhaps the central figure in human history. You ought to have an opinion on him. Certainly, Dionysius, a 6th century monk, thought so. He was the one who rendered the epochs of human history into two simple time periods in which the birth of Jesus becomes the pivot point on which the whole world turns.

Dionysius gave us the terms B.C. and A.D. B.C., returning to the time before Christ, followed by A.D., not after his death, but Anno Domini, the year of the Lord, the marking of his birth.

[4:38] And even if you're not familiar with the religious terminology of dividing human history on his birth, scientifically speaking, the world repeats the same thing as it talks about the common era and before the common era.

It all centers on Christ's birth, his life. So, settling for yourself, what level of authority you might ascribe to him is the question for every generation and it is one that each and every person would do well to consider.

And so, as you begin, what's your take on Jesus? Perhaps you say, I've never thought it through. This is the time.

What does he think set stake for you regarding the level of authority you would ascribe to him?

Today, we are going to see these things come together.

Let me just, in one sense, argue this from this text. The results for rejecting Jesus are not worth the risks.

[6:03] That's what I want to lay out from this text. The results for you and me for rejecting the authority of Jesus are not worth the risk.

We'll turn the coin over. The results for receiving Jesus are worth whatever cost or risk would come to you.

In our text, we see a collection of people who have settled their minds on Jesus. We're going to see what they have made of him.

You can find them right there in verses 27 and 28. And they came again to Jerusalem. And as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him.

And they said to him, by what authority are you doing these things? Or who gave you this authority to do them? Now, a couple of things about this collection of people who came to a settled understanding of what to make of Jesus.

[7:11] It describes them in three people groups. Chief priests, scribes, and elders. We're not familiar in our world with Jewish religious thought in their world.

But generally, these are members of a collection of 70 known as the Sanhedrin. They were responsible for the purity of the religion, of the Jewish faith, and the piety of the people as they worked it out.

These are people who well-reasoned their necessity to make up a decision on Jesus. They're not like us then.

Thank God, most of us are not part of some worldwide or religious organization that's responsible for what is truth.

They were. They're not like us in another respect. They've had a lot more time than many of us to come to a conclusion on Jesus.

[8:16] Some of you, this might be day one. Others, it's been a few months. For some others, you've been lingering on some years of consideration on what to make of Jesus.

But these folks had followed his work closely for three years now. And if you've been with us through this journey in the Gospel of Mark, you're quite aware that they now have some settled opinions.

Look at their question again. By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you the authority to undertake these things?

What do these things refer to? Well, let me restate the kinds of authority that they had been wrestling with.

They had been wrestling in one sense with his authority, first of all, early in the Gospel to be able to heal people.

[9:35] They had been wrestling most recently in the Gospel, last week's text, with his overthrowing of tables in the temple, signifying from his mind, I alone constitute what is true worship of God.

Proper worship? Through this one Jesus, tables overturned? The authority also, early in the Gospel, included the supremacy of his teaching.

They said his teaching was authoritative like no one else. Not just a faculty member among many, but the one who actually unfolded God's Word truthfully, fully, completely, where his interpretation is the divine understanding.

What authority! Not only that, they had seen his authority to cast out demons. In chapter 2, they had seen him say, he had authority, get it, get it, to forgive sins.

He had authority to delegate heaven's power to others. He claimed to have authority to give a share of an eternal life with God.

[10:55] All these things are in their minds and underneath this question. By what authority do you tell us how to worship God?

By what authority is truth to be understood by your terms on the Bible? By what authority do you purportedly dispose of the evil one?

By what authority do you forgive sins? By what authority do you declare anyone righteous? All these things belong to God. That's what's underneath their question.

And this is what you and I are called upon to consider in our generation for ourselves. One thing I love about Christ Church Chicago is we just treat you as an adult.

And these are what adults do. They make a determination for themselves on the level of authority they will ascribe to Jesus or not.

[12:03] What's your take on him? Does he tell us how to worship God? Is the word of Christ the word of God?

Is forgiveness of sins to be sought through the Savior and his death? Am I going to share or not in an eternal place with God based on my use of him as the pivot of human history?

Is he the one that justifies us? Is he the one that will give me a share of an understanding of life even now? What is your take on Jesus?

His response to their question is very interesting to say the least. Take a look at verses 29 and 30. Jesus said to them I'll ask you one question answer me and I'll tell you by what authority I do these things.

Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me. Wow this is he's now coming back. For some reason he does not want to provide an answer to their question but demands an answer from them to his question.

[13:25] What's going on here? Evidently he didn't want to answer that question because he knew they had already made a decision on him.

They weren't curious like some of you are this morning. They weren't attending a church on a Sunday to think I need to give some time in my life to the consideration of this question.

No. They had actually over three years developed their own opinions. They had rejected ascribing any level of divine authority to Jesus and what he's going to unfold is is not worth the risk.

Think about what they had thought to this point. In chapter two they questioned his authority to forgive sins. They questioned his association with sinners.

In chapter three they held counsel with others against him how they might destroy him. Already they had put out a word against him indicating that the authority he held was from the underworld not heaven itself.

[14:44] In chapter six he marveled at their unbelief. In chapter seven he accused them of rejecting God's word for their own traditions and in chapter eight we find them continually arguing with him and so he's aware that while it comes in the form of a question by what authority are you doing these things it's actually a statement by way of an accusation.

Who gives you the right to tell us how to worship God? What makes you think you are the final arbiter on what the Bible says?

In what world are you the one that can forgive someone's sin? Tell me how you think you overcome the evil one or give us a share in eternal life with God.

All of these things are there so their question is meant to put him in a bind. They want him to say the authority is unto myself I'm the son of God God himself and open himself up to a charge of blasphemy but he won't do it.

He won't do it. Instead of being put in a bind his question puts them in a box. We don't know what box they're in but fortunately the writer of the gospel here helps us understand.

[16:20] Take a look at verses 31 and 32. This is wonderful because we weren't there and we don't know why his question was so pertinent. But the writer tells us they discussed it with one another saying if we say from heaven he's going to say then why didn't you believe him?

That is John the Baptist ministry. But if we say for man well we're going to be in a heap of trouble because everyone around us believes that John was a prophet.

This is fascinating to me. Jesus understood that they had rejected John the Baptist as having any authority from God.

God. And Jesus knowing this watch it ties his authority to John's. I love this.

Normally we think that John must of necessity tie his authority to Jesus. But in this passage Jesus says I must tie my authority to John.

[17:30] it's a wonderful thing in regard to how these two John and Jesus collaborated together to reveal God's plan.

So here they are. They've made up their mind. And so what do they respond? Look at their response. We do not know.

Let me put modern day terminology on this. We plead the fifth. I'm not going to answer because if I do it's self incrimination.

I hope that's not what's underneath your take on Jesus today. I don't know. I hope there's no hidden underlying predetermined rejection of him because in a moment in the story you're going to see it's not worth the risk.

I love it when men and women and children enter into this Sunday morning family and then our life together with this question coming from a different heart.

[18 : 49] We don't know. We don't know. That's why we're here. That's why we walked in the doors. We sense that there's something going on with Jesus as the pivot point of history and we've come to determine and make up our own mind on the question.

We don't know. Someone helped me like the Ethiopian eunuch along the road. Tell me who is this stuff about?

And there are many people here today who are more than willing to sit down with you and say let me help you understand not so that I can convert you.

No, let me help you understand so that you can make up your own mind. And I hope then they would tell you rejecting his authority is not worth the risk but receiving his authority is worth whatever it may cost.

The text seems to move from this what's your take on Jesus in the first paragraph to what's at stake from his perspective.

[20 : 13] It's a parable. It's a story. to communicate truth. In this sense with a particular audience of those who have predetermined settled in their mind I'm not giving them any authority over my life.

This story is told then to these religious leaders not necessarily to you. It's told to those whose minds are already made up and I want to explain a couple of things about the story.

Take a look. Verse 1 of chapter 12. A man planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a pit for the wine press and built a tower and leased it to tenants and went into another country.

Interestingly this story rooted in the agrarian fabric of the Levant hence at Israel in Isaiah's ministry as being God's vine.

God planted a vine. God had a vineyard. God had a people that he promised to do something wonderful in the world through and in this story Jesus is alluding to God selecting a people for himself through whom blessing and fruit would emerge in the course of time and he lets it go.

[21 : 45] And verse two when the season came he sent a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. This word servant is interesting.

You could underline it two or three times in the text. He sends a servant verse four he sends another servant verse five another and then also verse five and so with many others there is a repetition of the owner of the vineyard bringing a servant in to say this is my vineyard where is my return now in the old testament just as the vine represents Israel the servant represents the prophets prophets were called by servants the prophets so what Jesus is saying is that God had a people and he sent prophets like John the Baptist as the last one but many others before them some who wrote books some who didn't write books

Elijah and Elisha Moses himself Isaiah Jeremiah Zechariah Malachi many times God sent his word to his people looking for them to receive it and what they found was they were rejecting it notice the way the escalation of this horrific activity in verses two and following takes place when the season came he sent a servant and they took him verse three and beat him sent him away under empty handed again he sent another servant and they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully it's this escalation of rejection and in verse five he sent another and him they killed indicating that even some of the prophets in Israel's history were killed lest they actually have to come under the authority of God's word and so with many others some they beat some they killed until wow this is a fascinating little part of the story

Jesus seems to pause almost before he starts verse six he had still one other a beloved son not a servant but the son the heir to the house a beloved son reminiscent of Abraham's description of Isaac himself who would be the one who brings God's blessings further along the way through his own suffering he had still another beloved son finally he sent him to them saying they will respect my son but those tenants said to one another this is the heir come let us kill him and the inheritance will be ours this is the full fledged rejection of the son of

God not giving him any authority ascribing him no place in their life doing what they want rather than submitting to his purposes and plans for them interesting that it says they would kind of take ownership of the property if they kill the son it's kind of like they get the land now some of you are in law school I am not never was and never will be but I do live in the state of Illinois and I'm familiar with pins and property index numbers I'm familiar with the Illinois adverse possession laws I know that if somebody leaves their property vacant for a long time forgets about it or doesn't tend it it can through legal transfer actually go to someone else and it becomes theirs under law that's a good way to get a lot of the empty lots in

[26 : 27] Chicago perhaps the adverse possession law legal transfer that's what they're thinking here if we can get rid of Jesus we control how to worship God we control where forgiveness is found we control it all they want to be self made men who worship themselves as God's creator so what happens Jesus finally finishes the story acknowledging that they took the son and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard and then he asks another question I always love Jesus questions I know you have many questions of Jesus but pay attention to the ones he has of us what will the owner of the vineyard do looks like it's a rhetorical question because he doesn't wait for their answer he will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others now we've moved into what's at stake according to

Jesus for those who reject his authority we know they've rejected it because look at verse 12 they were seeking to arrest him but feared the people for they perceived that he had told the parable against them what's at stake for those who reject of which I am saying it's not worth the risk four things what's at stake you by rejecting Jesus will have decided that you rule your life and he will consider you to be a rebel in his world that's what's at stake a rebel in God's world he has not left his property he is not unattentive to his rule he knows that he owns it all and he actually will come look at it says destroy the tenants in other words you not only put yourself as a rebel in God's world which if that's what you decide you at least need to own it somebody says to you what do you make of Jesus nothing I'm running my life but notice according to Jesus what's at stake is it merely that you are considered a rebel from the throne room of heaven but it says he's going to come and destroy the tenants if if you reject him he rejects you that's what's at stake he's the pivot on which human history turns the world turns on the birth of Christ if you should come this fall and determine to reject him he says he will reject you even before God on a final day notice what else it says he will give the vineyard to others you lose out on forgiveness of sins and understanding of worship life under his word a share in eternal life and guess what someone else who's sitting here today is going to receive him and they're going to say it was worth all the risks

I encountered my sins are forgiven my worship is accepted my life is changed the ordering of my pursuits is altered the promise of heaven is secure the share now in the fellowship by the Holy Spirit is mine see he's going to give it to others now in the in the story what he's saying is if the Jewish people of Jesus day typically here the Sanhedrin reject him as they were the leaders he will give the kingdom to someone else which is his apostles his disciples and all who receive him anyone religious or irreligious can be one who receives all of that by giving your life to the authority of Christ what's at stake who wants to be a rebel in God's world not me

I hope not you this is not your world who wants to reject him and be rejected by him not me I hope not you who wants to know that someone else is going to get all this good stuff from him and notice what else verse 10 we're almost done have you not read the scripture the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone this was the Lord's doing it was marvelous in our eyes what's at stake well concerning God's word nothing is at stake your rejection of Jesus only fulfills the prediction of the prophetic word that's what he says here the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone the promise prophecies indicated that some will reject

[32 : 45] I'm warning you today those who reject only fulfill the promises that had already been made Joachim Arameus an old dead scholar now made some helpful things here about this cornerstone said imagine at the time of the rebuilding of the temple of Jerusalem you know you got to bring in all the big stones you know they're quarrying rock and they're bringing it in and then they're deciding someone's on the work site deciding where these stones go to build the holy place and the temple and all of this and you're on the work site and you're like that that rock that doesn't fit I can't use that and so that piece of rock gets put on a big old dump truck and carried off to the side and we're not using it we rejected it it's not going into the house of God and then later they get finally to the gates and to the temple and you're looking for the cornerstone of the hole and

someone on the work site goes oh my word this thing that we rejected is actually the perfect fit for the cornerstone of the whole place that's what's happening that's what he's quoting from in

Psalms 118 here he's saying look you rejected Jesus you didn't think he was worth putting into the wall of your life he's the capstone of it all so let me shut it down what's at stake reject him and you're a rebel reject him and he rejects you reject him and others come in before you reject him and it's of no consequence of the word which will simply be fulfilled by you however turn the coin over sometime this fall accept him forgiveness of sins accept him an understanding of the word accept him adoption into his family accept him to share in the kingdom what's at stake what's your take the results for those who receive him are worth every risk and every cost that sits before you our heavenly father what a what a scene in the bible help us each one of us to take responsibility for ourselves this fall help us to sit with a good amount of time to consider what we make of Jesus and I pray Lord that for all that receive him they would become children of God and have a share in your kingdom in Jesus name we pray amen may may