

Luke 20:1-26

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[0 : 00] Good morning again. It's good to be in God's house with you, to be able to proclaim God's word to you, as well as to be a partaker of it myself.

Let us pray and we'll get started in God's word. Father, thank you for the morning, this winter day, and your blessing in the midst of it. How we're being able to gather together as your people for worship in the word. We bless and we honor your name. Amen.

One of the favorite movie in television genres of all time is the Western.

Young and old alike, when I was a kid, 1950s and 60s, would sit glued around their black and white television sets and tune in to the likes of the Lone Ranger.

Maverick. Cheyenne. And some of you are sitting with your faces blank. White Earp. And everybody, surely you've heard of the Rifleman?

[1 : 18] Well, the genre was so popular that it disrupted other social activities such as dating.

There was a doo-wop group known as the Olympics that recorded a song that lamented the powerful grip that the Westerns had on people of that day.

The title said it all. My baby loves the Western movies. To save my soul, I can't get a date.

Baby's got it tuned in to Channel 8. Now Wyatt Earp and Big Cheyenne, they're coming through the TV, shooting up the land.

I call my baby on the telephone. To tell her, half my head is gone. I got hit by a great big brick. She says, thanks for reminding me about that maverick.

[2 : 29] Mm-hmm. My baby loves the Western movies. My baby loves the Western movies. Mm-hmm. My baby loves the Western movies.

Of course, one of the great features of Western movies was the showdown. Where the forces of good and the forces of evil met face to face.

The good guys were sometimes confronted by outside forces that would come in to a town and take over. At other times, though, the bad guys were in control.

And the good guys enter in and put them out of business. That's the situation that we have in Jerusalem.

When Jesus got there, the bad guys were actually in charge. And as was noted in last week's text, Jesus had finally arrived in Jerusalem.

[3 : 39] But equally significant was the fact that he had come to the temple. Huh? He had come to the sacred space that God had ordained whereby he would meet with his people.

But this sacred space had been hijacked. Had been hijacked by the religious establishment of that day. And according to the last part of last week's text, chapter 19, verses 45 through 48, the showdown in the sanctuary had actually begun.

And the temple is the place where we find Jesus in today's text. You see it in chapter 20, verse 1? One day, as Jesus was teaching the people, and there it is, in the temple, and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up.

And there they go. Begin asking him a question. The first of two that we have in our text today. Jesus is there. But in addition to Jesus being there in the temple, in that sacred space of that day, two other groups are present.

You see them there in verse 1? There's the people. The people. And they are listening to him. According to the text, verse 47, I believe it is, that they are listening.

[5 : 13] They are all ears. They're listening to the word of Jesus. You see the people rather prominent. Look at verse 9. He began to tell the people there.

Verse 19. The scribes and chief priests sought to lay hands on him, and all that were at that very hour. For they perceived that he had told this prayer against them, but they feared.

There it is again. The people. Also in verse 26. And they were not able. There it is. In the presence of the people to catch him. The people were there.

They were listening to what Jesus had to say. But also there's a coalition of Jewish leaders. You see them there in verse 1? Yeah?

There's a chief priest and the scribes with the elders. They come up. These are, you might even say, the power brokers of that day. And they were the ones who were asking the questions.

[6 : 16] They wanted to engage with him so as to trip him up. The showdown was on. In the sanctuary.

The question that we actually see in verse 2, it is a question about authority. Who authorized you to do what you do?

You see it there? They said to him, tell us about what authority you do these things. Or who it is that gave you this authority.

Jesus. Jesus. Didn't you know that you're on our turf? And here you're coming to our turf acting like you are actually in charge.

What was it that had prompted their query? Their question? He had disrupted their business as usual activities in the temple.

[7 : 18] Back in the previous text. He had put a stop to their buying and their selling in the temple. Verses 45 through 46 of chapter 19.

The temple had also become a sanctuary for his teaching and his preaching ministry. You see that there? Because he was teaching daily in the temple in 1947.

If you would turn to Matthew's version, chapter 21 and verse 4, we also note that Jesus was healing the lame and the blind. Jesus. Who authorized you?

Come on our turf and do what you're doing. Rewind roughly 20 years prior to that. You remember Luke records it.

Chapter 2 verse 46. Jesus had come to the temple. And he had come to the temple as a 12 year old. A preteen lad.

[8 : 19] And it was there that he astonished the religious leaders with his answers to their question. And you remember what he said when his parents came seeking him.

He said, didn't you know that I needed to be about my father's business son? Back then, this 12 year old kid was not a threat to the establishment of that day.

And of the day in our text back then. But here he is. The old man. Having ministered for roughly three years.

Had a reputation as one who proclaimed that the kingdom of God is near. The kingdom of God is at hand. And here he was a threat. Who was he a threat to?

The robe wearing. Honor seeking. Power hungry. Greedy. Hypocritical. Religious.

- [9 : 16] Professionals. When I come to this text. Wow. There are implications friends.
Even for spiritual leadership today. So, so, so sobering. For those of us who have the privilege and the stewardship of leading God's people.
As far as exactly how we are doing it. Those of us who have the honor and the privilege to give ourselves in study.
And in leading God's people. Oh, this is a warning to people like me. To do it well. And to honor God.
Ah, here it was friends. Rather than the house of God. Being an international house of prayer. A house of prayer for the nations.
- [10 : 18] Isaiah 56.1. It had been reduced to a den of robbers. Jeremiah chapter 7. Prayer.
Was absent. Profiteering. Was present. The work of God had been co-opted by a religious establishment.
Who was in it for what they can get. And as Jesus went throughout all of the land. He describes what he saw. The people were as sheep.
Without a shepherd. If there is one thing that God's people need. It's a shepherd. And I found out that shepherds are needed.
One of the things that gives us a measure of consolation. And a bit of job security. That doctors need shepherds. Professors need shepherds.
- [11 : 20] You know. People need shepherds. Academics. Need shepherds. And that is what God's people deserve.
And that is what God's people deserve. To be shepherded with the very care of the great shepherd himself. The people of that day were not getting that from the religious leaders.
Then. Huh? Jesus was not a card carrying member. Of their group. They hadn't authorized or co-signed his actions.
Huh? So Jesus responded as he often does. He responded with a question. Didn't he? You see that in verse 3. He said I will also ask you a question.
Huh? Let's reverse the roles a little bit. Tell me. Was the baptism of John from heaven or from God or from man?
- [12 : 24] So they huddled about it. And they reasoned within themselves if we say A. Huh? From heaven.
They would say why didn't you believe it? And if we say man. Oh here. Look at. There's the people again. All the people. Will stone us to death for their convinced that John.
Was a prophet. Call. Thanks Andy. Trapped. Huh? In.
Advice as it were. Huh? They had rejected John already. Luke writes about it. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves.
Not having been baptized by him. That is John. And guess what? Jesus and John. From chapter 1, chapter 2.
- [13 : 23] They were on the same team. Huh? The leaders refused to acknowledge the source of John's call and ministry. And listen to this closely.
Because Jesus is going to. Though he doesn't answer them directly with the parable. With the story. He does in fact answer them. They had turned a deaf ear to John's prophetic voice.
And guess what? They were doing the same thing with Jesus. Huh? He refused to give them a direct answer. Huh? Huh? But look at verse 19.

They knew it. For they perceived that he had told this parable against them. But they feared the people. Huh? It was a part two.

You might say of his response to them. He responded through the story. And this very story that Jesus told exposed the depth of their spiritual dysfunction.

[14 : 25] Huh? And that they were. Huh? Though in positions of leadership, they were spiritually dysfunctional.

Huh? Huh? Well, what does that mean for those that were under their leadership? Do you pray for your spiritual leaders? I hope so.

We need it. We need it as far as our going out and coming in. Our marriages need your prayers. Our families need your prayers.

The ministry of the word need your prayers. Hands on leadership. Need your prayers. Huh? They exposed spiritual dysfunction.

Of the spiritual leaders of that day. Notice the story. Again, the characters come into clear view.

[15 : 32] Do they not? Look at verse 9. There is a vineyard owner. A man planted a vineyard. And secondly, there are the tenants.

Who were, you might even say, tenant farmers, if you will, on the land. And who were responsible for giving a portion of the produce to the vineyard owner.

So he goes into a far country. The owner does. But look, in verses 10 through 12, we see a third entity, if you will. We see servants.

He sent a servant, verse 10, to the tenants so that they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But we see the shameful treatment of these servants who were sent by the vineyard owner.

And really treated in a cruel kind of way. Let me just give a little background that may help us to really get our minds around what's being said here.

[16 : 40] Wealthy absentee landowners were common in Palestine, particularly in Galilee. Land would be leased to these tenant farmers who would farm the land, set aside a portion of the produce, and the landowner would then send agents to collect on the rent payments that were due them.

When Jesus tells this particular story, this parable, Isaiah chapter 5 is likely in view. As a matter of fact, turn with me over to Isaiah chapter 5.

And we can see how this metaphor fits the people of God. See it there in Isaiah chapter 5 and verse 1?

Let me sing for my beloved, my love song concerning his vineyard. There it is. My beloved has a vineyard on a very fertile hill.

And look at the care. He dug it and cleared it of stones and planted it with choice vines. He built a tower in the midst of it and hewed out a wine vat in it.

[17 : 56] And he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. The reference is to Israel, God's vineyard. He's expecting good fruit.

But in reality, he got bad grapes or bad fruit. And again, the owner in the Luke text represents the Lord.

Back to Luke, but think also of the psalmist in Psalm 80. You need to turn there. But he speaks also of God's people as his vineyard. Listen. You brought a vine out of Egypt.

You drove out the nations and planted it. You cleared the ground for it. It took deep root and filled the land. The mountains were covered with its shades. The mighty cedars with its branches. It sent out its branches to the sea and its shoots to the river.

Again, Israel being referred to as a vineyard. The planning of the Lord in Psalm 80. Back to Luke.

[18 : 57] In Luke, in verse 10, the scene shifts to sending servants to collect the fruit of the vineyard. But again, they're mistreated. They're sent away empty-handed.

They are really abused, if you will. And this pattern of sending and mistreatment continued for some time. It escalates.

Beating. Shameful treatment. Wounding. And what's in view here is really God sending his prophets to his vineyard, to the people of Israel.

And the dastardly treatment that they receive at the hands of the people of God. And particularly the leaders. Over the years, I've often referred to a scripture that really summarizes the treatment of Israel to God's prophets and God's finally sending judgment.

The references to 2 Chronicles chapter 36. And I'm going to ask you to bear with me. I want you to turn there because this really sums up what their treatment of the prophets and the judgment that comes to them on the basis of the mistreatment of God's servants.

[20 : 26] God's servants, the prophets. God's servants, the prophets. 36. And verses 15 and 16. It's where the writer of the Chronicles is sort of summarizing Israel's history.

Look there. The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers.

Why did he do it? Because he had compassion on his people and his place, his dwelling place, his city, his land. But they kept, notice what they did, mocking the messengers, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets.

Until the wrath of God rose against his people. Until there was no remedy. That's what's being talked about. That's what's being pictured.

That's the story that Jesus is telling as it relates to the nation. The nation had not given the Lord what was rightfully his.

[21 : 33] And the leaders were not leading them accordingly. Service and worship and honor and thanksgiving and surrender that was rightfully his. That's the role of spiritual leaders in the lives of God's people.

It's to urge and to encourage and to exhort and to teach God's people to give to him what is due to him. Huh? And as we think of the amazing love of God in Christ, the songwriter has put it so well.

Love, so amazing. So divine. Demands. My life. My soul. My all.

Huh? Not giving to him what was rightfully his. And John, friends, John the Baptist, stood in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets.

He had exhorted them earlier on in Luke chapter 3. Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. Huh? And those who stood in the tradition of those who rejected God's servants here in our text.

[22 : 45] Spiritual leaders. Power brokers of that day. Will on the verge of rejecting God's son. Huh? Because of that, Jesus' parable includes what we see beginning in verse 13 in Luke 20.

The owner of the vineyard said, what shall I do? I will send my beloved son. Huh?

Huh? Perhaps they will respect him. I've sent my servants. And they mistreated them. I'll send my son now.

Perhaps they will respect him. Huh? Though the gracious actions of the owner had been spurned. The owner.

That is, God did not stop. He would send his beloved son. No? Just as the prophets had been sent by God. Just as the prophets had been invested with God's authority.

[23 : 52] Just as John had been sent by God. Where did you get your authority, Jesus? Look at the parable. Listen to the story. And you'll understand it.

Huh? His authority was from God. But rather than respecting the son and the story, they plotted against him.

Huh? Jesus had cast the plotting crooks of chapter 19, 47. He put them in the story.

As those who would be plotting against him. Huh? This story anticipated their murderous mistreatment that would be the lot of Jesus.

What's the judgment for this kind of folly? Huh? This kind of foolishness. They ended up killing him. Huh?

[24 : 52] Let us kill him. Verse 14. So the inheritance will be ours. They threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What will the owner of the vineyard do to them?

He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others. Oh my. And in a very strong way.

Listen to their response when they heard this. They said, surely not. No way. Huh? Their response.

But Jesus. He took them to scripture. Huh? Jesus words were difficult for the audience to hear.

But Jesus response to them was very clear. You see that there in verse 17. What then is this that is written? He refers to scripture.

[25 : 47] He quoted and applied Psalm 118 verse 22 to the situation. Just as the psalmist saw himself or the nation as despised, rejected, and disrespected, but was eventually destined for honor.

So Jesus applied those words here to himself. You see them there? The stone. Huh? That the builders rejected has become the main stone, the cornerstone in the building.

Huh? He was and would be further rejected by the leadership of the nation. But we see the clear folly of rejection. Listen.

Then and now. To reject him is foolish. Because like the most essential stone in a building, so was Jesus and is Jesus.

The main stone in the church. The main stone in the new Israel. The new temple. And to reject him was self-destructive. According to verse 18, you can't win.

[27 : 01] If you stumble over him, you're going to be broken to pieces. If the stone falls on you, it's going to crush you. You don't win. You can't win against the stone. Huh? Where did Jesus' authority come from?

Who authorized Jesus to do what he did? Huh? His authority came from God. Just as John's had come and those who were before him. And to reject Jesus is to reject the God of heaven.

And those who do so will be judged. Then and now.

He came from heaven. Showed the way from the earth to the cross. My debt to pay from the cross to the grave. From the grave to the sky. Huh? That's what he did.

Authority question wasn't the only question of the day though, was it? Another question, the loyalty question follows in verses 20 through 26.

[28 : 06] Though these leaders were on the verge of laying hands on the son. They were strained only by fear of the people. But they continued the opportunity to catch him.

To deliver him to the government authorities. You see that there, verse 20. So they watched him and sent spies who pretended to be sincere. That they might catch him in something he said.

So as to deliver him up to the authority. There's that word again. And the jurisdiction of the governor. The civil authority is in view.

Huh? It came with disarming flattery. Oh Jesus. You're such a great teacher. Yeah, we know you speak. We know you speak truth.

Well, that's sort of conflicting with what was going on earlier. They wonder where his authority comes from. So, they're asking him what's right and proper.

[29 : 06] Whether to pay taxes or not. Very timely message is that about six weeks. You and I are going to be sending in our checks. Maybe some of you will get some return. They're trying to put him in a no-win situation.

So he gave a clear pay the tax action. But if he had done that, a clear, if he had given that, it would not bode well with the more devout patriotic Jews.

On the other hand, if he had said, don't pay the tax, it could lead to charges against rebellion against the government. But Jesus didn't miss a beat, did he?

Huh? You see that? He perceived their craftiness in verse 23. He said, show me the money. Show me the denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?

Huh? Huh? He knew that they were up to and he want up them and he used this great visual aid. Huh? This coin that had been put in circulation by the government that included the likeness of Tiberius Caesar, the ruler, the emperor.

[30 : 19] His image and his name and his claims as high priests were on that particular coin. And of course, the obvious answer is that it was Caesar's image.

But Jesus' answer was right that he gave. And the best answer, you see his answer that he gave, said to them, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar and to God the things that are God's.

Verse 25. Huh? He put things into perspective in two spheres. The earthly sphere and the universal sphere.

And there are loyalties and there are allegiances that are appropriate to both spheres. Huh? Our Lord did not pit government against God or God against government.

Each of whom deserves their due. Well, Caesar had some great initiatives. Government had great initiatives in that day. And they needed support through taxation.

[31 : 23] And friends, there's no perfect government, is it? But yet good and beneficial things come from our tax revenues. But greater still, the God of life, deserves the allegiance of all to whom he gives life and breath and all things.

Huh? And then he's given his life through his son. Huh? So yeah, many of us are going to be writing checks over the next six to eight weeks. And government will get their due or else.

Huh? Let's not shortchange God of what to do him. Huh? The God that who rules sovereignly and wonderfully deserves what to do him.

We have dual citizenship, don't we? We are citizens in this world. But Paul reminds us our citizenship is in heaven. So we've got a passport for this life.

And then we've got heavenly transport that is to come. Huh? The coin had originated and was minted by the government.

[32 : 45] Jesus said, use it to support the same. What belongs to God? Those who bear God's image belong to him. What belongs to him?

Loyalty. Devotion and dedication and fruitful living. And the worship of his people. Total commitment to him. Not partially.

Not a percentage. Of our everything. Totally. We belong to him. All that we have. So Jesus refused to be caught in the either or dilemma, didn't he?

Both and there was a sense. Once again, they're. Tactics have failed. His wise answer neutralized their particular ploys.

Well, a couple of questions in the text. But I want to ask us a few questions myself in closing. If Jesus walked into our faith communities today, would there be a showdown in the sanctuary?

[33 : 53] Or in our community? Would Jesus' agenda clash with ours? I hope not. But it's worth asking the question. Are we being good stewards of what has been trusted to us?

Particularly those of us who are spiritual leaders. Are we faithful stewards of God's work and mission that has been trusted into us?

Are you participating in the mission? As those who are part of the body of Christ? Here's another question. Is the father's business really our business?

No. Or are we simply conducting business in his name? May that not be the case. Have we set up systems that are ripe for rebuke and for correction?

Oh, and once again, the implications for those of us who are gatekeepers are huge. We must beware lest we repeat what's we have a deaf ear to God's word and a deaf ear to God's son and his servants.

[34 : 59] While we do well at marveling at Jesus, at people in the text, we marvel at his wisdom, his power, and his might. We admire him as a teacher.

One who is constantly sort of bashing the heads of his opponents. We can't stop with marveling at Jesus. It's not enough to do that.

He's to be worshipped. He's the beloved son of God sent from the father. He's the main stone in God's kingdom economy. Church is one foundation.

It's Jesus Christ the Lord. And our songs, even today, are focused in on that reality. Christ being the main stone. Cornerstone. Let's worship him.

Serve him and submit to him. Total allegiance to God means accepting and reverencing his son. And, friends, it's really foolish to do anything else, huh?

[36 : 01] Are you stumbling over him? Or have you submitted to him? Trust that it's the latter. Pastor Jay, what are you saying today? Here it is in a sentence or summary.

Jesus is to be respected and revered as God's son. Who is invested with God's authority. And those who reject him do so to their own destruction.

That's the message of the text. How do we respond? We recognize him and we celebrate him. We see his past work done for us.

And we praise God for it. We anticipate his future work in us. Through us. For us. We celebrate in song.

We celebrate in submission. Blessed be his name. May we dare not reject him. Is my prayer. Father, we love you.

[37 : 01] We give thanks to you this morning. For this text. And its clarity. May we. Trust you.

May we not stumble over the sun. In any way. But may we serve you. And follow him in doing so. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah.