

What is He doing? SMBC Student Derek Yu

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[0 : 00] What comes to your mind when you think of the word authority? Do you think of authoritarian regimes, democracy, teachers, parents?

See, the reality is that we believe that authority should be submitted to if it is the right kind of authority.

We submit to the police. If someone breaks into our house, we call the cops, because they have the authority. We don't simply just take law into our own hands.

What if I told you that you need to submit yourself to Jesus' authority?

You probably ask me why. And the passage that we're going to be looking at today, Mark 11, verse 27 to 12, verse 12, answers that very question.

[1 : 09] Where does Jesus get his authority from? And why should we submit to that authority?

The talk today will be broken up under three headings.

First heading, Jesus' authority challenged. Heading number two, Jesus' authority rejected. And heading number three, Jesus' authority ultimately reigns.

So let's start. Heading number one, Jesus' authority challenged. I used to, probably like some people or many people, I used, maybe not many, but I used to hate going to school.

It was just a miserable experience. And back when I was young, going through that teenage angst, I used to be quite rebellious against my parents and teachers.

And I was just constantly challenging authority after authority after authority. And in Mark 11, verse 27 to 33, we see the religious leaders, they're challenging authority too.

[2 : 18] But they're not just challenging anybody's authority. They're challenging Jesus' authority.

In the beginning of chapter 11, Jesus has just come into Jerusalem, the city of kings, the city of God's anointed.

And the people, what they do is they line the streets, they cheer, they lay down their cloaks and their branches. Authority. And then he goes into the temple in chapter 11, verse 15 to 19.

The temple symbolized God's presence, God's dwelling place. Jesus walks into the temple and he starts flipping tables.

Just imagine I walked into church today and I saw your communion table and I started flipping it.

Not that I probably could, but just imagine I did. You'd probably be thinking, what is going on?

Who is this guy? Authority. And the religious leaders, they're jealous. Because Jesus is taking away their authority.

[3 : 30] Jesus is gaining a bigger following than them. So what they decide to do is they decide to trap Jesus by posing to him a question.

Verse 28. By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority to do them?

It's a trap. Because if Jesus says his authority is from God, he's going to be accused of blasphemy and that can get him killed. If Jesus says his authority is from man, then he's going against the Roman Empire and that can get him killed.

It's a trap. But Jesus responds by asking them a question. Verse 30.

Tell me about John the Baptist. Was he from heaven or man? Why does Jesus ask this question?

[4 : 37] It's because this question actually provides the answer to their question. Because if the religious leaders believed in John's authority, then they would have known that Jesus gets his authority from God because John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and told people Jesus is the Son of God.

But if they say that Jesus, now if they say, sorry, that John's from heaven, then verse 31, Jesus would reply, then why didn't you believe him?

Because they obviously didn't believe that John was from heaven. But verse 32, can they say from man? They fear the people because everyone believed John to be a prophet.

And even though they don't believe that John's from God, they're not willing to admit it because they fear the people. So verse 31, what they decide to do is they decide just not to answer Jesus.

Jesus' authority challenged. And friends, some of you in this room might be having questions about Christianity. How do you know that God is real?

[5 : 54] How do you know the Bible is reliable? Did Jesus really rise from the dead? How can you believe in miracles? And friends, if that's you, then I encourage you to keep asking questions and keep seeking.

But friends, don't be like the religious leaders who pose questions, but they're not really concerned about answers. All they're trying to do is stir up trouble, trap, mock, ridicule.

Friends, I encourage you that if you're not a follower of Jesus today, to ask questions and earnestly seek the truth. Because just maybe God will reveal it to you.

Jesus' authority challenged. Point number two, Jesus' authority rejected. Mark 12, verse 1 to 8. Last year in December, my wife and I, we went to Greece for a short holiday.

And we arrived at this place called Monastriki Square. And we saw this little group of protesters, these anarchists. For those of you who don't know, an anarchist is basically someone that doesn't believe in the government, they don't believe in a higher authority.

[7 : 14] And it just totally confused me. Because I had no idea. It just didn't make sense. How can you run a country without a government? It just didn't make sense. But what was clear, though, was that they were rejecting authorities.

And Jesus now, he goes on to use this parable, this story, to show the religious leaders that they too are rejecting his authority. And through this parable in Mark 12, verse 1 to 8, Jesus also will answer their question about where it is that he gets his authority from.

To summarize the parable briefly, there's a man who owns a vineyard. He decides to go away. He leases the land to some tenants.

The time comes for harvesting. He sends his servants. And the tenants, for some crazy reason, decide to start beating on the servants.

And notice the patience in the master, sending servant after servant after servant. And also notice the escalation of violence.

[8 : 27] Verse 2, they beat the servant and sent him away. Verse 4, they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully. Verse 5, then they killed another. Verse 6, keep beating and killing.

All of these servants coming with the master's authority until eventually. verse 6, he still had one other, our beloved son.

Finally, he sent him to them, saying, they will respect my son. After all that's happened, who in their right mind would send their son?

Australia's current foreign minister is Julie Bishop. And America's current secretary of state, US, sorry, United States of America, is John Kerry.

And when they're sent overseas, they're not just representing themselves. They're representing the prime minister or the president. And when they go, they go with the prime minister or the president's authority.

[9 : 41] And that's how it is when the father sends his son. The son represents the father's authority. The son is like the father going. So verse 6, when the father says, they will respect my son, it's because it's like the father going himself.

The son is the heir. But what the tenants decide to do is they decide to end up killing him.

They want to take the inheritance for themselves. And friends, here is the answer to the religious leader's question.

In Isaiah chapter 5 in the Old Testament, the vineyard is a way of God speaking about his chosen people. The master in the story is God. The servants in the story are the prophets that God sends to his people, calling them to repent and turn to him.

The tenants in the story are the religious leaders who constantly, one after another, reject the vineyard. No, sorry, reject the master.

[10 : 51] All they end up doing is killing God's prophets. And the son, here is the answer, the son is Jesus and he comes with the father's authority, with God's authority.

Where does Jesus get his authority from? He gets it from God. But the religious leaders, not only did I reject the son, not only did I reject Jesus' authority, but they eventually killed Jesus too. You see, Jesus knows that he's going to die. He's already prophesied it in Mark a couple of times. Jesus knows that he's heading to the cross.

Point number two, Jesus' authority rejected. And friends, in what ways can you and I reject Jesus' authority? I think that there are primarily two ways.

The first way is to actively reject Jesus, make a stand against Jesus, make yourself known as a prominent atheist, hating on those who love Jesus.

[12 : 05] But I suspect that for most of us in this room, the temptation is not to actively make a stand against Jesus, to actively reject his authority, but rather passively reject Jesus' authority.

And with passive rejection, you don't reject Jesus with your words, but with your life. For you, outwardly, you might profess Christ, but inwardly, Christianity is a social club.

It's a gathering. It's all about being a good, moral person. Jesus, yeah, he's a nice guy, but to change your whole life, your whole worldview for him, that's another matter.

And friends, both of these methods of rejection is what the Bible calls sin, rebellion against God. Jesus' authority rejected.

point number three, Jesus' authority reigns. Mark chapter 12, verse 9 to 12. Anna and I, we got married roughly one and a half years ago.

[13 : 31] And for Anna's wedding present, I decided to buy her, it was a new friend back then, but I decided to buy her a Samsung Galaxy S3. I know it's old, I know the S5's coming out, but back then, it was the best thing ever.

And one day, we were at this restaurant eating, and Anna decides to put her phone on the table.

And by the end of the night, we had no idea where it was going.

And I was just so sad, not because she lost it, but because we didn't know what happened to it. We suspect strongly that it was stolen, that she might have just dropped it. But if someone did steal it, let's just assume someone did steal it, it's right to expect justice, right?

It's right to expect that the phone will be returned and that justice will be met, if it was stolen. And you see, if justice is deserved for something as small as losing a phone, or someone stealing a phone, sorry, then how much more is justice demanded for the crime against the father in the story, where people killed his son?

So friends, how will the master respond? How will God respond? Verse 9, He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.

[14 : 51] Friends, God's judgment is just. God's judgment is final. For those who reject Jesus' authority, God will bring about judgment on them.

Jesus goes on. Verse 10, Have you not read this scripture? Of course they have, but they don't get it. So Jesus goes on. He quotes from Psalm 118, verse 22 to 23.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. Psalm 118 is a psalm about God's deliverance.

In Psalm 118, God's chosen king is surrounded on all sides by his enemies, but God in his power delivers his king.

And back in ancient times, the cornerstone was the foundation stone. It was the stone you laid first, and every single other stone was built on top and around it.

[15 : 59] And you see, even though God's chosen king is rejected, the ruler ends up becoming the cornerstone, the most central stone in God's kingdom.

And Jesus, he quotes Psalm 118 and uses it in Mark chapter 12, verse 10 to 11 to refer to himself. Jesus knows that his authority is being challenged. Jesus knows that his authority is being rejected. But Jesus also knows that his authority will ultimately reign.

Jesus has already foretold his resurrection. After he is murdered, he will be raised to life again after three days. And this stone that the builders have rejected will be the cornerstone on which people like you and I, people find salvation and forgiveness.

There's a saying that goes that power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Give someone complete power and eventually they'll abuse it.

[17 : 24] And I guess you see it in history, don't you? You see it in Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot. But it's not always true.

At least for one, it is not true. Because it's not true in Jesus. Jesus has absolute authority.

But Jesus uses his authority for good. God, he lets his authority be rejected by humanity to the point of death on a cross, taking on the punishment of sin on himself, the wrath of God, so that our sins would be forgiven, so that we wouldn't be rejected by God, the one who has true authority. Jesus uses his absolute authority to love and save the lost. Wouldn't you want to submit to that kind of authority?

Friends, I just want you to ask yourself, whose authority in life are you submitting to? Who is it that defines and dictates how you live?

[18 : 43] Is it your friends, parents, peers? Are you constantly changing who you are in order to please others?

And I'm sure that in a room this big there are people that are constantly submitting to others and letting them be defined because that was me. Throughout high school constantly fearing living for the opinions of others, constantly letting my life be defined by what other people thought of me, constantly submitting to these people's authority.

Friends, whose authority in life are you submitting to? A couple of months ago, I'll confess now, oh yeah, this is being recorded, no, it's okay, I'll confess that a couple of months ago I got a parking ticket.

Yes, I'm so bad, I got a parking ticket. And back then I was thinking, how could they book me? I was only parked there for three minutes and it was for a good cause as well.

Anna needed to buy some medication so I parked in the no parking spot for three minutes, she went out, she came back, I got home, I didn't even know that I got booked until a letter got sent to me and it told me that I was fined.

[20 : 03] And at that point I had to decide whether I would pay this fine or not, whether I would challenge it or not, whether I would submit to this authority or not. And friends, there are many times in life when you have to come to a decision regarding whether you submit to authority or not.

will have, can have, sorry, serious repercussions. And tonight you have to ask yourself, will you submit to Jesus' authority?

Why don't you submit to Jesus' authority? Submit yourself to Jesus, the one who uses his authority to demonstrate his limitless love for you on the cross.

Why reject that authority? Why live with the consequences of eternal judgment and condemnation?

Friends, although all of us have rejected Jesus' authority, Jesus gives us the chance to repent.

Through Jesus' resurrection, he demonstrates his power over death and his ability to forgive sins.

Through trusting in Jesus, submitting to his authority, true forgiveness can be found, a right relationship with God.

[21 : 29] Jesus' authority was challenged, rejected, but ultimately it rains. Will you submit yourself to Jesus' authority?

Let me pray. Father, we thank you that you are not like rulers of men who use their authority for personal gain.

Instead, Jesus is the one with true authority and you use your authority for our good. We thank you that Jesus' authority is used for our love and for our good, and we pray that we will submit to Jesus' authority.

And in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.