

What is He doing? SMBC Student

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[0 : 00] Loving Heavenly Father, we thank you that you sent Jesus Christ to this earth to show us what you are like. Father, we thank you that you give us your Holy Spirit so that we can listen and learn from your Bible, especially when we listen and talk about Jesus Christ.

Father, help us today to understand what's before us. And we ask this in your name. Amen. I don't know about you, but I have been pulled over by the police on way too many occasions.

The reason is because I used to have a car which was a bit like a sports car, but it wasn't really in good nick. In fact, it was multicoloured because I had a go at respraying it and it didn't quite work. That was after it got hit by a car when we were on the way to the zoo with the kids.

Then my friend borrowed it and someone in the car park put a dent in the side door. And then when I'd just finished fixing the mess of the zoo problem, another person ran into me while I was going through a green light.

So this car was a bit rough, a bit ready. And so police would often pull my wife and myself over because I think they suspected that we were doing the wrong thing. More often than not, we'd get breath tested and they'd say thank you and off you go once they realised that we were upright and good citizens.

[1 : 11] But isn't it funny how when we face authority, if we're in the wrong, how different it is from when we face authority when we're not in the wrong.

I had no problems with police pulling me over. It was slightly inconvenient, but I knew I was okay. Whereas when authority of the policeman impacts us personally, when we are subject to their authority, isn't it a little bit different?

But what about God's authority? What do you think about God's authority? Over you or over the people around you?

Well, I'm going to suggest that we're going to be looking at a passage here that tells us about God's authority. In fact, there's a really good verse in Mark 12 verse 10. It says that the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

In other words, the Bible is telling us that we are no longer rejected by God because this important cornerstone was rejected on our behalf.

[2 : 18] So this morning, let's look at three things. Let's look at the religious leaders questioning authority. Then we're going to look at these questionable tenets. And finally, we're going to have a rhetorical question time.

What does Christ's authority mean for us? So, first of all, let's turn to Mark 11 verse 27 where it says, They arrived again in Jerusalem.

And while Jesus was walking the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders came to him. So these are the religious leaders of the time.

And they came up to Jesus. They were about to confront him. And what were they going to confront him about? They were going to confront his authority. Look at verse 28. By what authority do you do these things?

They asked. And whose authority? Now, what things? What are they talking about there? Well, you may recall that Jesus entered the temple just a few days before that.

[3 : 23] And he saw the people selling cattle and exchanging money. And he got really, really angry. And he did something that I'm sure the religious leaders knew he was not authorized to do.

He drove out the cattle. He overturned the money changers' tables. Now, I don't know about you, but if I was making some good money at the temple and Jesus came up to my table, I'd sort of go, yeah, yeah, come on.

But no. No one challenged him at all. He just went and he cleared out the temple. How dare you turn my father's house into a marketplace? It was this that the authorities, the religious leaders were challenging.

How can you do that? By what authority can you do that? And does Jesus answer their question? No. For some reason, he asks a question. Why?

Why does Jesus ask a question when they've asked him? Well, I want to suggest to you that Jesus was bringing up the main point here. He was asking them to think about authority.

[4 : 26] Was John the Baptist's mission and what he did under the authority of God or was it by the authority of man? Now, let's think about it.

What would have meant for them if John the Baptist, what he did, was actually divine? Well, I want to remind you that these Jewish leaders were appointed by Herod Agrippa.

And they were often appointed for political reasons, not because they were necessarily the right people. Which reminds me, if you are a 1980s Yes Minister fan, of an episode in Yes Prime Minister where Humphrey, who was the administration person, wanted to become the dean of a high-prestige university.

But the existing dean had to go somewhere for him to do that. So they were offering him a bishophood. And the Prime Minister was the one who appointed the bishop. And so this gentleman called Sir Humphrey was saying to the Prime Minister, you've got to go for this person from this university.

Yeah, he doesn't really believe in heaven. He doesn't really believe in hell. In fact, he doesn't believe in the virgin birth or necessarily that Jesus was God. But he's a good man. He actually loves trains.

[5 : 41] And that means he's a really good person. And so there's this very humorous conversation, much more than I could bring out to you, about how these people were politically assigned.

So Herod Agrippa is these guys. He's their boss. And can you imagine what would happen if Herod heard that those he had employed were saying John the Baptist was divine?

Because what did Herod do? Herod decapitated poor old John. It beheaded him. And so these guys were there. And if they said, yes, John the Baptist was divine, then, whoops, our boss killed him.

That's not such a good look. Or maybe it's a fact that John the Baptist was saying, look, here is Jesus. Jesus is the Messiah. So if John the Baptist was actually divinely appointed by God to tell the truth and the whole truth, he was saying Jesus is authorised the Son of God.

So Jesus must also be divine if John the Baptist was divine. What if John the Baptist was just a human and he was just under human authority? What would be the implications there?

[6 : 51] I want to suggest to you that then maybe John was a false prophet. Maybe he wasn't religious. Maybe he was just a hypocrite. Maybe he was someone who was proclaiming what he shouldn't. And if that's the case, what can we say as religious leaders?

Because let's look quickly at what it says here in verse 29. Jesus said, I'll ask you a question. Answer me. And then I will tell you by what authority I'm doing these things. Verse 31.

They discussed the question amongst themselves. If we say it's from heaven, then he will say, why didn't you believe? Why aren't you followers of Jesus? Because John was pointing to Jesus as the Messiah.

Why didn't you believe John? And then in verse 32. But if we say of human origin, and what were they scared of? They were scared of the crowds. And why?

Because the crowds thought that John was a prophet. The crowds thought that John the Baptist was the real thing. And so they were scared of the people. And so what did they say?

[7 : 54] They answered, we don't know. In verse 33. We don't know when they knew. They discussed it. And Jesus knew that they had discussed it.

And so Jesus was showing them by asking them a question about John the Baptist's authority. Do you think that I'm also authorized by God to do what I'm doing? To clear the temple and more?

So I want to suggest that Jesus shows us that his authority was definitely heaven sent. that he was authorized by God to do what he was doing because he was the Son of God.

And I believe that we who believe and trust in Jesus, we also are very happy to acknowledge that Jesus is the authorized person from God to do what he did.

And what did he do? He died on the cross and rose again for us. So we don't fear God's authority when we trust him, do we? We don't fear Jesus' authority at all.

[8 : 53] In fact, we welcome it. We acknowledge it. I had a friend who was a policeman. And we were walking down the street one day, happily talking in the middle of the city. And we came to a set of lights.

And the little red man was flashing. But I was so engrossed in the conversation, I didn't even think about the little flashing red man. And I kept on walking across the road. Because there was no cars about.

So I just kept walking. And, of course, my friend who was a policeman in his full blue uniform stopped because of the red man who was flashing. And the crowd who were there in the streets, they all stopped because there was an authorized person there.

And they didn't want to get into trouble. I want to suggest to you that my fear of authority was just non-existent then because he was a friend. He was a great guy. And I'm a friend of Jesus.

In fact, I welcome Christ's authority because he's my friend. And it helps me in my life to live under his authority. To do the things he asked me to do because I know that Jesus has asked me to do these things.

[10 : 02] So why did Jesus not answer the question? Well, I want to suggest maybe he did answer the question in the parable. I want to suggest that maybe this was a very good tactical response of Jesus.

Because he was sufficiently indirect so that they couldn't accuse him of anything. They couldn't arrest him of anything. But if you look at the parable, I think Jesus is clearly telling them by whose authority he was doing it.

But let's look at that parable. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to retell the parable. But I want to pretend that I'm a religious leader. So I'm going to tell it from a religious leader's point of view. So I'm a Jew.

I'm a religious leader. But I've seen the death and resurrection of Christ. So I'm now a firm believer in Jesus Christ. So as I go through this parable again, I want you to think.

Is Jesus answering the question about whose authority he could do these things? So there once was a man, Jesus said, who planted a vineyard.

[11 : 05] Now whenever I hear the word vineyard, I'm automatically going, Isaiah 5. Isaiah 5 is a beautiful chapter about how God planted a vineyard for the people of Israel.

I remember that God let them come into the land of Canaan. And they inherited built towns. They inherited planted crops. God prepared everything for these Israelites.

It was an awesome place for them to go into the promised land. So when Jesus says straight away, there's a man who planted the vineyard, I'm thinking, great, this is about God.

God the Father has planted a vineyard for Israel. He has provided for them. And so this man planted the vineyard. He put in the watchtower. He put in the walls. He put in the ditch. And he put in the winepress.

And then he rented it to some tenants. And these tenants, or farmers, were to look after the vineyard to produce the crop. And then he went on a journey.

[12 : 04] And my mind automatically thought when I was hearing this story, well, who are the tenants? It's us. The religious leaders. We're the ones responsible for the vineyard. We look after Israel.

We're authorised to do everything we can to help Israel flourish. That must be us. We're the tenants. Awesome. Jesus is talking about us. But then he said something that just made my heart sink.

He said, so God, at the time of the harvest, authorised a servant to go and collect what was the owner's due. God had the father, God the father, had organised and authorised a servant to come to Israel and to tell them about him.

But what did we do to this prophet, to this servant? Well, Jesus said in the parable that this man was beaten and went away empty-handed.

So the owner of the vineyard authorised another servant to go down and to collect the crop that was due him. But this servant they beat and they shamefully looked after him.

[13 : 12] And so he authorised another servant to go down and that one was killed. And he authorised another servant to go down and that one was also beaten and killed. So the owner of the vineyard said, ah, I'll send my son.

I expect that they will respect him because he is my son. So the owner authorised his son to go down to the vineyard and to collect the crop that was due him.

And what did they do? When the servants and the tenants heard and saw him coming, they're going, ah, the son, the son, let's kill him. It's our inheritance. Because we have this custom in Israel that if a property is left abandoned by the owners, then those who occupy the land inherit it.

So if we kill the son and the dad's not around, this is our vineyard. So they did that and they killed the son. They threw him out of the vineyard.

And that's what we did to Jesus. We as the religious leaders, we threw Jesus out of Jerusalem. We threw him on the cross and he died because of our disobedience to him.

[14 : 24] But it's an awesome thing. Three days later, he rose again. And my eyes were opened to this parable. Jesus was saying that because of our disobedience, he would be rejected.

But because he was rejected, he would then provide the means of salvation. Because he hung on the cross, because of that cross, Jesus promises life to us because he was rejected.

And so I rejoice in Christ's authority. I rejoice that because of the authority of the Father, he came to this earth, he died on the cross and rose again.

I rejoice in his authority because Jesus said when he had come, risen from the dead and he was talking to his disciples, he said, under my authority, go and make people disciples of me.

Jesus Christ's authority is what makes our jobs easier in regards to witnessing to our friends. It is difficult, it is hard when we do that, when we witness to our friends.

[15 : 32] I've had plenty of rejects as well. But I know that it is by God's authority that I'm doing these things. And I also know that it is by God's authority that I can not worry about the spiritual warfare that's going on.

There are many countries in Africa and many people in the Aboriginal community of Australia who are turning to Jesus because they know he has authority over evil spirits.

And they are very oppressed by evil spirits in many of these countries. And they know that because of Jesus' authority, the evil spirits are condemned and they have no authority over those who believe in Jesus.

They welcome and love Christ's authority. Not only that, I don't have to worry about things. I don't have to worry about what I'm going to wear or what I'm going to eat. I don't have to worry about what's going to happen to my children because God's authority is there and his authority will help me to understand that he is in control.

So let's ask ourselves some questions. It's time for question time. I want you to think about it in your own heart. In verse 10, we read of chapter 12.

[16 : 50] Haven't you read, Jesus said? The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. The Lord has done this and it is marvellous in our eyes.

The stone the builders rejected has become the most important stone of the building. There is a tradition that when Solomon's temple was being built, that the quarry where they got the stone from sent this cornerstone or this capstone to the temple area.

You may recall that the temple area, not the sound of a hammer could be heard on the temple area. So all the chiselling took place in the quarry. They sent this cornerstone to the people building the temple.

But the people building the temple, they mustn't have looked at the plans or something. They didn't realise what the cornerstone was. So they rejected it. They put it aside. We don't know what this stone's for. Anyway, then it came to the important bit, the time to put the most important stone in the building.

So they asked the quarry, please send us the cornerstone. And the quarry's going, what do you mean? We've sent you the cornerstone. Ah, they said. Is that what that stone in the corner over there is for?

[18 : 03] Now the lightbulb goes on. So the stone that they had rejected was the most important stone in the building. And Jesus is using this psalm to help people understand and to help us understand that the most important thing, Jesus Christ himself, was rejected.

Jesus Christ came to deliver us from our sin and to die on the cross. And it was because of the rejection of the religious leaders that he did, in fact, go to the cross and die for our sins.

Their rejection meant our salvation. Jesus also said something really strange. Well, when I first heard it, it was a bit strange.

He said, I have the authority to lay down my life. And I have the authority to take it up again. He said this in John's Gospel.

Now, what is it? Jesus had authority over his death and resurrection. It was under his authority that it took place. That he had the authority to lay down his life and to rise again.

[19 : 15] So it wasn't like things were out of control and Jesus had a bad moment and there he was on the cross. That was the plan. That was the design. That was what he came to do. And the book of Romans, the Apostle Paul tells us that at one time, we too, we too were disobedient to God.

But he says, we have now received mercy because of the result of the Jewish leader's disobedience. Can you see how Jesus has turned the whole situation up on its head?

He was challenged. His authority was challenged. And Jesus says, no. You guys who are challenging me, I am the appropriate authority. And it is by my authority that I am going to bring salvation to the world.

So in Mark chapter 12, verse 12, we read that they, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders, look for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken this parable against them.

My original question at the beginning of our sermon was, how does God's authority impact you? In your own life, does Christ's authority give you comfort and blessing and excitement because you know that under his authority you can have life to the full?

[20 : 42] That under his authority we can witness to our friends? And under his authority we have the power to overcome sin and to overcome the evil in this world, but only under his authority.

These religious hypocrites were afraid of Jesus' authority, I would say.

Because when they confronted Jesus' authority, they couldn't answer. They had no response. They had nowhere to go.

This morning when we come to this passage, what does God's authority mean for you? Let's pray. Our loving Father, we thank you that your word promises in Romans chapter 8 that all things work for our good.

We know, Lord, that we suffer in this world, just as Christ did. But we know that there's a hidden plan behind our suffering, that you are in control of it all.

[21 : 53] We thank you, Lord, that it is through your authority that we can tell others about the great love shown by you on the cross through your death and resurrection. And Father, as we come towards Easter and as we think about your cross and your resurrection, we ask, Father, that you'll help us to tell our friends that through your authority we will tell them about your great love.

And we ask this in your name. Amen.