

Give to God what belongs to God

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[0 : 00] We're going to pick it up at verse 17 of chapter 11.

So, verse 27 of chapter 11.

That's Mark chapter 11, beginning at verse 27. I'm going to read through to chapter 12, verse 17, and hopefully it'll become apparent.

Now, hear God's word. 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.

[1 : 10] 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 howled 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 do I do these things. And he began to speak to them in parables. And 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.

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 they killed him.

[2 : 21] 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. And they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.

And 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. And they were seeking to arrest him, but feared the people for they perceived that he had not told the parable against, that he had told the parable against them. So they left him and went away. After they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians to trap him in his talk.

[3 : 33] And they came and said to him, teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone's opinion. For you are not swayed by human appearances, but truly teach the way of God.

Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay them or should we not? But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, why put me to the test?

Bring me a denarius and let me look at it. And they brought one and he said to them, whose likeness and inscription is this? They said to him, Caesar. Jesus said to them, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.

And they marveled at him. Well, if you're here last Sunday morning, you'll know, in many ways, this is exactly the same message, but the other side of it.

Let me start with an illustration. If I gave you a coin this morning, you'd be able to point out to me that a coin has two sides, but the sides are not the same, even though it's the same coin.

[4 : 48] And in exactly the same way, the passage last week and the passage this week are exactly the same message in essence, but it's the different side of the same message.

Last week, it was all about don't rob God. Don't rob God. Don't rob God. This week, it's all about giving to God what belongs to God, which amounts to the same thing. So, to not rob God is to give to God, and to not give to God what belongs to God is to rob Him. And we understood last week that one of the key things that belongs to God is, of course, trust. But to trust God is extremely difficult. I mean, really difficult. We say, oh, just trust God. It'll all work out in the end. Well, it will all work out in the end, but trusting God is difficult because what we do is we take the trust that God has given us, and then we go and put it in other things. And when God has given us something like trust to give back to Him, and we don't give it back to Him, but we put it in something else, we're robbing God because it belongs to God. [6 : 00] And so trusting God is difficult because you have to put it in God alone. And I liken this to a parachute jump, that your Christian life, and especially the part of your Christian life that deals with trusting God, should be like a parachute jump.

And we all know that the moment we jump, if we were to jump out of a plane with a parachute on, you've got no other hope than the parachute. You've got nothing else to put your trust in other than the parachute.

You've got one thing to put your trust in, and that's the parachute. And so the reason why many of us wouldn't do a parachute jump is not necessarily because we're afraid of heights, it's actually because we're more afraid of putting our trust in one thing.

And so our Christian life doesn't flow in the same direction as Jesus wants it to because we end up putting our trust in other things than God alone. And the moment we do that, according to Jesus, we're robbing God.

We're taking something that God has given us to give straight back to Him, but we're taking it and then we're giving it into other things. We're trusting this, we're trusting that, whatever the reasons are.

[7 : 13] And so the point about not robbing God is give to God what belongs to God. Give it to Him alone. Trust Him alone. And so the difficulty of trusting God alone is that it's the alone part.

Okay, we can all sit here this morning and say, yeah, I trust God, but for what? You go, well, for this, this, and maybe that, but these other things, well, my trust goes over here.

Well, that's not the kind of following that Jesus wants us to do. It's either all or nothing. Well, on the flip side to all of this, then, we are to give to God what belongs to God.

Okay, if we're not to rob Him, okay, which was the previous set of passages that we read, then the same message is being continued, but Jesus is just turning it on its head.

Don't rob Him, therefore give to Him. Give to God what belongs to God. And one of the reasons why we don't give to God what belongs to God is because we want it for ourselves.

[8 : 22] We want to keep it for ourselves. You know, I've often said, just to use this illustration again, that money, I don't know if you've ever thought about this, but money is not actually a creation of God, it's a creation of man.

Ever thought about that? Who invented money? Who created money? Well, God didn't. We did. But God is able to bless us even through the things that we come up with.

But the trouble is, is if we take and not give, for instance, wherever we give it to, okay, and we hoarder it, it's a bit like hoarding the manna in the tent in the wilderness. Do you remember what happens?

You store more than you need, and it becomes putrid. It becomes sick. It becomes horrible. And so nothing, there's never any fruitfulness in not using what God has given us to use.

You can't hold on to it and think, I'm going to keep it all for myself, and I'm going to be great. So the reason we don't give to God what belongs to God is because we want to keep it for ourselves.

[9 : 27] And this is illustrated in three ways here. Firstly, in chapter 11, verses 27 through to 33, with the authority of Jesus being challenged. Then Jesus telling this parable about how the son who's connected to authority ends up being killed.

Okay, you can't challenge the authority of God without challenging God, because his authority and his person can't actually be taken apart. And then finally, about paying taxes to Caesar, all of which has to do with giving to God what belongs to God.

So we begin here with the authority of Jesus challenged, and it raises a question for us of why is it, and I've met a few, and I think you probably have as well, why is it that people who have never been to heaven become experts on how to get there?

Well, speaking to someone, well, I'm a good person. I'm going to go to heaven. Well, have you heard what God has to say about that? No. Do you believe God created heaven? Yeah. Do you not think it's important that you understand what God says about heaven? Well, no, I just, I'm a good person. I'll get there. So why is it that we as human beings have a propensity to know more about the things of God than God?

[10:49] More about heaven than God knows about heaven? Why do we think that we know better than him? And of course, it's an issue of authority.

The moment we claim that we are right and God is wrong, it's a stance of authority. I'm right, you're wrong. I know, I can prove it and you can't.

There's the issue. So these people here are coming up to challenge the authority of Jesus, which reveals more about them than it reveals about Jesus. And so Jesus has got a question for their, of his own.

They say, by what authority do you do this? And he says, well, I'll answer you if you can answer me. Fine, they say. So Jesus says this question.

Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Now, the problem here is, is that John is liked by the people. John is recognized as a prophet by the people. But even more than this, John says it's not about me, it's about Jesus.

[11:55] So if they accept John and John points everybody to Jesus, what is the conclusion? You have to accept Jesus. And so if you get rid of John, you get rid of Jesus. But if you accept John, you accept Jesus.

So they're absolutely stumped here entirely. John does speak God's words. And so if he speaks God's words, if his baptism is from God, if what he does is what God told him to do, then everything that John also said about Jesus must be equally true.

And so these people here, they don't really like John all that much, but they know that the people like John. And so it's a bit of that second person separation. In other words, you know, I'll be friends with you, because if I'm not, then my friend won't like me anymore.

Right? You know, it's sort of a cat and mouse game of, you know, if I stay on your side, I'll know that all these people will stay on my side. And because I want these people to stay on my side, I'll make sure that even though I don't like you very much, I try my hardest.

And when relationships are that kind of, you know, tenuous, and almost in the realm of blackmail and favors, they never work.

[13:11] It's all about power grabbing and what can I get out of the relationships that we're in. And so these Pharisees here are trying to stay on the side of the people, because that's where the power is.

You know, the more people that we got on our side, and the less people Jesus got on his side, then we win. Right? It's a power of might. You know, more is better.

But Jesus, brilliantly, as his way, traps them in this predicament, because if they give John any credit and say that what John did is from God, then they're also affirming that what John said about Jesus is also true.

You see their problem. So the issue here for them is that they can't challenge the authority of Jesus without challenging the authority of John, and ultimately the authority of God himself.

And so Jesus is absolutely stumped them. But their question is not really because they want to find an answer. They just don't like what Jesus is doing. They want to challenge Jesus to show Jesus up, to say, you know, we don't believe you, we don't like what you're doing.

[14:27] And more importantly, because Jesus has come to give everything back to God, what belongs to God, their authority wants to hold on to it.

So the reason they challenge the authority of Jesus, in the same way people today challenge the authority of God or Jesus, is ultimately because they want to hold on to something that's not inherently theirs.

And that is the right to do what they want to do. And as a believer, we know that we don't have the right to do what we want to do. God owns everything. Salvation following Jesus is a surrender to the right of God.

over my life. And to the right of God over your life. That's what it means. It means that he has more authority than me. His authority always trumps my authority.

But that's, again, it's not a popular message. Because I'm right. And what do you do with a person who thinks that they're always right? And more importantly, who thinks that they're more right than God?

[15:34] You can't do anything with them. You can't do anything with them. You can't go anywhere. Because the issue here is one of submission. And so what are you going to do with a person whose authority you can't challenge?

And who has come to get everything that belongs to God? What are you going to do with a person like that? Well, there is only one thing you can do with a person like that. And that is kill them. And that is exactly what they did.

That is exactly what they did. They took the son and they killed him. And God says here in verses 10 and 11. That that very stone.

That that very person that they rejected has actually become the cornerstone. And verse 11, more importantly, this was the Lord's doing.

And it is marvelous in our eyes. And the whole point here is, is if you imagine Jesus Christ, which he is, is the foundation to everything.

[16:35] And the foundation on which you stand before God. And you reject Jesus and therefore you reject the foundation. What are you standing on before God?

You have no standing before God. Okay, the only person that gives us the right standing before God is the foundation of Jesus. That is the only way we can stand before God and survive.

Because as the parable ends, as we see, that he destroys the vineyard owners and gives the vineyard to somebody else. God, God is not one to be messed with.

God is one to be messed with.

God is the very one that crushes us. This is how serious it is. So Jesus then, secondly, tells them the parable. And the parable is really about people who reject the authority of God.

[17:58] Who do not want to give to God what belongs to God. And he says it this way. That God created a vineyard. This is all illustrative.

And in the vineyard he puts servants. And soon as the fruit was ready for God. Remember, it's God's vineyard in which servants work. And as soon as this fruit is ready, God sends one of his other servants to go and get it.

And the servant goes. And the people who now work in God's vineyard says, well, we're not giving you it. We're not going to give to God what belongs to God. We're going to keep it for ourselves. So what do they do? They beat the servant. And they kill some of the servants. And they beat and they kill. And it's just an absolute mess. They just drive them out.

It doesn't matter how many turn up. They keep driving them out. So God decides, the vineyard owner says, well, what I'll do is I'll send my son. And we have this wonderful verse in verse 6 where he says, he had still one other, a beloved son.

[19:03] Finally, he sent them. Finally, he sent him to them saying, they will respect my son. And the reason verse 6 is there is for us to find it absolutely astonishing that the heir of all things, the heir of everything, gets sent into the place where everything is his.

And they kill him as well. It's astonishing that Jesus Christ can be treated this way. But what is even more staggering about this is that Jesus is the one telling the parable.

Think about it for a moment. Jesus is the one telling the parable. And so if Jesus is telling the parable about the son being sent into the vineyard to get what belongs to God, to give it back to God, and they kill the son, what do you think he's saying to them that are listening?

He's saying, look, I know what I've come to do. And more importantly, I know what you're going to do to me. By Jesus telling this parable, he's saying, look, this is why I've come.

But I also know what you're going to do to me. You're going to kill me. And they did. Imagine listening to a story like that.

[20:32] And then all of a sudden the story becomes incredibly real. That the people that Jesus is speaking about are the people listening. And the son is the one telling the story.

And the son telling the story of the son sent into the vineyard, who is then killed by these people.

How do you face, how do you look at a person in the face after they have said something like that?

So Jesus Christ has come to get what belongs to God. But he knows that as he steps into the vineyard, as he steps into the world, as he steps into the place to get what belongs to God, the people who are in that place are going to take his life.

Are going to kill him. And yet Jesus says, this is why I've come. Verse 11. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

He says, I've come for this. So Jesus Christ will die at the hands of sinful people for sinful people. Jesus dies at the hands of sinners for sinners.

[21 : 44] Jesus. The cross was not, how did it ever get to this? Don't ever imagine the cross in any way that Jesus was somehow surprised that it ended up that way.

Jesus was never surprised when they came to arrest him in the garden and took him to be judged and then put him on the cross. Jesus was not thinking at that point, how on earth did it ever come to this?

No, Jesus knew, as illustrated by this parable, exactly what was going to happen to him. The moment he decided to come and get what belonged to God, to give it back to God, he knew that meant that these people were going to kill him.

The cross was not a surprise to Jesus. It may have been a surprise to everyone else, but it was not a surprise to Jesus. Thirdly then, in conclusion, it doesn't end there.

It doesn't end there. Jesus goes off, and then verse 13, some Pharisees and some Herodians try and trap Jesus in what he says.

[22 : 59] Again, they don't like Jesus, they don't like what he's teaching, they don't like the fact that he teaches with all of this authority. And the same lesson is to be learned here again.

Give to God what belongs to God. Now, here's the problem. If everything belongs to God, is it right to pay taxes to Caesar? Right?

If everything belongs to God, is it right that we pay taxes to the government? And the answer is, no. No, it isn't. It should be no. But unfortunately, it's not no. Okay?

Is it right that we pay taxes to Caesar? Caesar. So you can understand their thinking behind this. If Jesus has come to get everything that belongs to God and give it back to God, then is it right that we have to pay taxes to somebody else and give to somebody else something else?

Well, Jesus knows exactly where they're going with this, so he turns it on its head, as he normally does, and asks for a coin to be brought to him.

[24 : 00] Bearing in mind that these people want Jesus to say it as it is. Have you ever had a conversation with someone when they have a particular ability to just say it as it is?

And the one moment where you really want them to say it as it is because you've got a few other people around, you want to trap them in their own words.

You want them to say in their presence what they said in your presence. And so you set up this sort of fake meeting or this meeting for the sole purpose of trying to get out of them what they had previously said to this person.

Well, so they say, look, we know, Jesus, you don't care about human opinions. We know that you don't care about human appearances. Just say it as it is, Jesus. But the reason they want Jesus just to say it as it is is so that he digs his own grave, so that he buries himself.

And Jesus, again, brilliantly says, bring me a coin. And when they bring a coin, he asks them this question, and whose appearance is on the coin?

[25 : 13] Whose likeness is on the coin? Whose inscription is on the coin? And they say, Caesar's. And so Jesus says, right, give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God.

Now, why would Jesus say that? Here's why. What he's saying, in other words, is if Caesar has managed to get his image on it, then give it to Caesar.

Whatever has got Caesar's image on it, give it to Caesar. But make sure you give to God what God has got his image on. You.

You have God's image on you. You see, we can rob God by not giving him trust. We can rob God by not giving him worship. We can rob God by not confessing our sins.

We can rob God in that way. But we're ultimately robbing God if we're not giving back to God what belongs to God. Well, what does belong to God? Everything that has his fingerprint on. Everything that has his image on.

[26 : 23] You have God's image on you. See, the real issue here is that these are people who do not want to give their lives back to God. Who do not want to give their lives to God because their lives actually bear the image of God on them.

They were created in the image of God. And so give back to Caesar what Caesar has got his image on. But make sure you give back to God what God has got his image on also.

You have God's image on you. So don't rob God. Give to God what belongs to God.

Everything comes down to you. It is deeply personal. I mean, this is God invading your private life and your personal life at the most deepest level.

God cannot be shortchanged with a few prayers here and a few prayers there. He cannot be shortchanged with a little bit of church attendance here and a little bit more over there.

[27 : 36] He cannot be shortchanged with attending a few meetings or serving at a few clubs. That would be the equivalent of paying tax. Will you give a little and keep more?

What God wants is you. Jesus has come to get what belongs to God. And you belong to God.

Jesus has come to get you.

So give to God what belongs to God. You are never going to be able to work out how precious Jesus is.

Or how important Jesus is by how many people build their lives on him. Remember, Jesus is not only the cornerstone. He is the rejected stone. And you can never really work out how conviction plays out in a person's life.

One person can be convicted of sin and go very quiet and just stand up and leave the room.

Another person can be convicted of sin and be quite loud as though nothing's bothering me.

[28 : 44] Whereas another person can be convicted of sin and kill Jesus. And they did. We never quite know how conviction reaches our heart.

But we know. I'm not quite sure what it does in your heart. I'm quite sure what it does in mine. And it's uncomfortable. But it's always getting me where Jesus wants to have me.

And so you can never work out how precious Jesus Christ is. Until you repent and believe. And you build your life on the rock.

So that we trust him. Worship him. We confess our sin. If we don't, we're robbing him. But if we do, we're giving to God what belongs to God.

It's a mess. And it's such a mess that you need to understand what it took for God to sort it out. It took Jesus dying on the cross to sort it out. God is not Caesar.

[29 : 46] God is God. God is not the tax man. God is God. And if our Christian life looks more like paying tax, where we give a little and keep more, then we're more worshipping Caesar than we are God.

God wants everything. And the reason God wants everything is really, really simple. It is because everything is his. Jesus has come to get what belongs to God, to give it back to God.

And God wants the whole world back. Because it's his. So the conviction this morning for us all is don't rob God, but give to God what belongs to him.

Amen.