

Christ's Authority
Mark 11:27-33

John 6:22-51

Ephesians 2:1-10

Responsive. Roman 8: 24-33

This week we will be finishing out chapter 11. The way that Mark has written this chapter it seems to have taken place all rather quickly, and it seems almost in the same day but as we had said when we started out here in chapter 11 that Marks record appears to be rather trunkated making what looks to have been a period of months from fall, through the winter into a matter of a mere few weeks. Some of the evidence that points to the fact that Jesus stay here in Jerusalem before he was arrested and ultimately crucified shows that he did not actually stay in Jerusalem itself but rather in Bethany and would journey into Jerusalem and today we see one of those verse denoting that Jesus would come and go which is why many scholars believed that these events were over the course of many months, and not just a week or 2.

In verse 1, it shows Jesus arrival to the area, when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives is when he sent 2 of his disciples to go and gather the colt for him to ride into Jerusalem. Then follows the account of Jesus arriving in Jerusalem but at verse 11 it says that after he went into the temple and looked around, it was late so he left and went back to Bethany.

Now in verse 12, Mark records here that it was the next day that Jesus while traveling back to Jerusalem accounters the fig tree which he curesed, and in verse 19 says that when evening had come they left again. Verse 20, says in the morning they passed by the fig tree and saw it dried up, and he then instructs them about faith, prayer, and forgiveness and in our verse starting out today it says Then they came again to Jerusalem. So we can see that these 3 accounts happened over the course of at least 3 days and what we will read today is the Jewish Leaders response to Jesus when he through out the money changers, and merchants the day before. So even though I know we have read it a few times now I want to go ahead and read I think the entire chapter, so we can see the flow of these events and what brought about what we read in our passage today. So turn with me to Mark chapter 11, and we will read starting in verse 1.

Jesus throughout his entire ministry had been dogged by the religious leaders, even while he was ministering around the sea of Galilee men were sent to check on this Jesus figure who they were hearing was doing miracles and teaching with authority in the synagogues like one of the scribes. So when we read their opposition here today, this isn't anything new, this isn't just a reaction to what happened the previous days in the temple but rather this was something that was building up, but the problem now is that Jesus is no longer this figure out by the sea of Galilee, he is here, in Jerusalem in the Temple disrupting the practices. On one level you can not blame these men to react in such a way, for I dare bet we would act pretty much the same if someone came in here today and started trying to change everything we do. But this is more then just trying to change the temple services, this was a direct attack against their system, against the corruption that they were profiting from. By throwing out these merchants and money changers, Jesus was not just causes a disruption in the temple service, he was also causing an economic issue for these religious leaders for this was not only effected the money used to maintain the temple practices it was also effecting the leaders who profited from the pilgrims coming to the temple to offer sacrifices.

So by this point, these religious leaders had had about enough of this Jesus character. He was no longer just some guy off in Capernium who was a threat to their religious authority, he was now here, in their own back yard. As I said this opposition is nothing new, even as far back as chapter 3 a group of Pharisees there after being unsuccessful in their attempts to discredit and turn the people against him it says that they plotted how they might destroy him.

That was back when he was just teaching in the synagogues and healing the sick and casting out demonic spirits. But now, now he is in the sacred temple in the heart of Jerusalem. They need to get rid of him, he is undermining their authority, but the problem is that it would seem the people favored Jesus. They could not just have him arrested and killed because then he would be a martyr and only strengthen the opposition to temple and their authority. And we see this tension, between their desire to deal with this Jesus problem, but the fear of the repercussion in our passage this morning. This had been there problem this entire time, they had been seeking how to destroy him since chapter 3 but have been unable to catch him in anyway that would justify their doing so. Every time they would try to trap him, Jesus would only turn it around on them and they would end up being caught in their own schemes and hypocrisy. Just like we see here, when they challenge his authority.

Verse 28, by what authority are you doing these things? And Jesus does not answer plainly, knowing their motives and reason for this line of questioning, but rather reverse their own trap on them when he asks, The baptism of John, was it from heaven or from men? John was baptizing people in the name of God, and said that he was the precursor to one who was greater. Which we all know was Jesus, but the Jewish Leaders refused to recognize Jesus as the messiah, as the promised one and by accepting John's baptism as being of God, they would then have to accept the Jesus was the one who John was preparing the way for. It would be an admittance that he was the messiah, and an admittance of their denial and unbelief. Jesus' responses are not defensive, he is not being deliberately obscure and trite in his answers in an attempt to save himself from them, but instead his answers point to the very issue of the accusation.

You ask what authority I have done these things? Well, let me point you to the one who was crying in the wilderness making the way for me. The one who the prophets foretold, but yet, you deny. Jesus was not hiding, he was revealing himself. He had been revealing himself from the beginning, but they refused to see, they refused to hear and understand.. Quickly I just want to read this excerpt from the Pillar Commentary on Mark which summarizes Jesus show of authority throughout the book of Mark.

The characteristic of Jesus that left the most lasting impression on his followers and caused the greatest offense to his opponents was his exousia, his sovereign freedom and magisterial authority. In his first public appearance in Mark, Jesus astounds the synagogue congregation by his supremacy over both Torah experts and the demonic world. Both effects his teaching and his exorcisms derive from his divine authority. The authority of Jesus emerges as the foundation and impulse of his subsequent ministry and exhibits itself by his laying claim to the prerogatives that otherwise belong only to God. Jesus binds Satan, the strong man in chapter 3 verse 27, he presumes to forgive sins, chapter 2, verse 10, he claims supremacy over the Torah and the sabbath chapter 2:23-3:6, and he replaces the temple in Jerusalem as the place where God meets humanity. 15:38-39. But not only that, his speech to and about God is unique among Jewish rabbis, his frequent prefacing of statements with Truly I say to you presumes to speak with the authority of God. His reference to God as abba exhibits a filial closeness to God unparalleled in Judaism, and his suggestive use of I am repeats God's self revelation to Moses.

Mark records that as Jesus was approaching the temple, the Sanhedrin confront him. It is likely that it was a group of men appointed from the Sanhedrin itself to act on their behalf, because the Sanhedrin was an organization of 71 members who were comprised of the Chief priests, scribes, and elders. This organization worked as a buffer between Rome, and the Jewish nation of Israel. These men were the top religious authority, they had almost complete freedom when it came to religious matters but as we will see later their political power was restricted by the Roman government. They did not have the authority to sentence anyone to death, they had to appeal to Rome to seek such a penalty. This is Mark's first reference of the Sanhedrin, and they are only mentioned in this book one other time during Jesus' trial. So we can see why this question they ask about authority is so important to them, for not only what Jesus did in the temple the day before caused an issue, his entire ministry was an affront to their authority, for he claimed to have come from God and had little regard for the temple practices, and traditions.

So it isn't just this one event that caught their attention, they have been watching him for quite a while but now that he had come and disrupted their temple services it was time that they took a more direct approach. They asked him 2 questions, by what authority do you do all these things, and who gave you this authority. I am sure they thought they had him over a barrel, because if he answers that his authority came from God, then they could claim that he was a blasphemous false teacher. This line of questioning does acknowledge 2 things, 1, that he does indeed have a unique empowerment which the likes of have never been seen before, and 2nd, the things that he had done were all things that they understood only God was capable of. But instead of having faith, and believing him, they denied him and sought to discredit and silence him. This is not the first time that there was this sort of accusation. Back in Chapter 3 there were those claiming that Jesus was casting out demons by the power of the father of demons. And just as Jesus destroyed that argument, he does so here as well..but not directly, but by asking another question.

Instead of plainly answering which would have given them the ammunition they sought to eliminate their Jesus problem once and for all, he points them instead to John the Baptist. In doing so, he is not avoiding the question, or taking an easy way out, but rather he is putting the ball back in their court for there is only one answer and now it is they who must answer it. Everything that they needed to know about Jesus could be summed up by one event, and that is the baptism of Jesus by John. He did not appeal to the Torah, to the prophets, or even to the temple which were all things that were shadows instructing of himself, but instead he points to John the Baptist and asks if his baptism was from heaven, or from men. Let us turn quickly back to chapter 1 and read the account of Jesus baptism, starting in verse 9.

“It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” If this baptism was indeed by man, if this event could be explained by empirical science then the Sanhedrin are right, and have grounds against Jesus but as we see, even they know when faced with this question that they can not accuse Jesus of blasphemy and falsehood. For in so doing the people would likely up-rise and turn against them.

Then the problem arises, that if this baptism is truly from heaven, or from God, then that would mean that he truly was the messiah that he claimed to be and that he was acting well within his

authority, which would mean that all of his teachings, and actions against them and the temple would then be justified and righteous fully exposing the sin and corruption of the temple system and its leaders.

Well, they couldn't admit to this either, so they end up being stuck in a spot where they can not answer for either answer they give would essentially be a total loss of their own authority. So they answer they do not know. But that really isn't entirely true, they have seen and heard the same thing that others have but they did not believe, instead they reacted in anger, jealousy and fear for the loss of their power. They were unwilling to make a judgement when confronted with the truth of Jesus, and instead chose to kick the can down the road a bit, neither accepting or denying, essentially taking a stance of, "we will keep an open mind" But in doing so, it just points to their unbelief and cowardess unwilling to be faced with the truth of God. Jesus just told his disciples if you have faith and believe you can move mountains, and the other gospels record Jesus teaching that if you have faith like a mustard seed you can say to this tree be pulled up by the roots and planted by the sea and it would be, or to the father whose son was demon possessed he said, If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.

When we approach Christ, in faith he will not turn us away, he is faithful to forgive our sins, to make us holy and right with God. As Jesus said, all those that the father has given me, will come to me and I will not cast them out, I will not lose one. If there is faith, even as small as a mustard seed Jesus says, Truly I tell you, your sins are forgiven. But when faced with the calculated unbelief of these men from the Sanhedrin he answers, neither will I tell you. That is not a good place to be, to be so hard hearted and blinded by their own pride and supposedly righteousness that they suppressed the truth that they knew. Unwilling to admit their pride, arrogance, and corruption and instead choose to defend it.

This is the decision that each of us come to when confronted with God, when we are confronted with the teachings of Jesus, his disciples, and the bible. We either believe that it is From God, or it is from man. And the outcome of that decision ways even heavier on us then what these men from the Sanhedrin were confronted with. If God's word is true, if all of these things that have been recorded in the bible come from God, then we as mankind are not in a good place. But, if we try to skirt around it, make excuses for it, and say things such as this is just a book written by men who were using it to manipulate, and lord authority over others then we are lost like these Sanhedrin, Jesus says if you don't believe my word, then you are not one of mine. For my sheep hear my voice, and follow me.

So the reality is, you either believe, or you don't. There really is no, keeping an open mind just in case it's true. There is not half measure, no half answer either the bible is true and Jesus Christ is the one and only savior sent from God to reconcile mankind to himself, or it is just a collection of stories written by some men a long time ago to exercise some authority over people. So how does one determine which is true, which one is it? Well that brings us back to God's authority doesn't it. IT brings us to God's sovereign grace in salvation. For each and every one of us without God's working of the holy spirit applying the blood of christ to our hearts and minds we would all answer like the sanhedrin. Skeptics, unbelieving, and lost in our sins.. thinking that we know better then God. Relying on our own minds to decide for ourselves what we believe to be true. We all do it, we all have done it, and without God reaching down dragging us out of this pit of sin and despair we would continue to justify our unbelief by the rationality of our own broken minds which are not even able to understand or fathom God.

That is why the beliefs commonly called the doctrines of grace, or Calvinism is actually very important, and something to fight for. I have heard it many times, that both the doctrines of grace, and the doctrines of mans free will according to salvation are both true...but that is an answer from ignorance, an answer that is unwilling to face the truth of the gospel, an answer like the Sanhedrin's answer here, it is calculated because mankind does not want to admit that they do not have any authority

We do not have the ability to come to God on our own. One might say, all you need to do is make a decision for Christ, and have faith...but I ask, where does that faith come from? We do not each have some dormant innate faith that we can choose to activate, it is not just sitting there waiting for us to decide to follow God. Faith is a gift, granted to us, without it we can not believe, and without God giving it to us, we don't have it. That is why we read Ephesians 2 this morning...For by grace you have been saved..not of will, not of your own desire, not of your own decision..but by grace, through faith which is not of yourself, you don't have it, it is a gift of God. We are not saved because we make a decision and confess christ, we are saved because by God's grace he has granted us the faith to believe his word, and through his word the holy spirit works conviction, and by conviction we cry out in confession of our sins seeing that we are unrighteous creatures that are unable to stand before God, and that we need a righteousness that is not our own but that is supplied through the covering the Christ's blood. By whose authority are you saved? Is it by your own, or by Gods? And if you are saying that it is you that must make the decision, it is you who has faith and chooses to exercise it then you my friend are putting your own authority above God....and that is not a good place to stand. For you have made your will, your God, salvation then is by your will, and it is by your will that you have been saved. You might want to grab your bible and start reading again for you will not find that in there at all.

Christ has been given all authority in heaven, and on earth. If you believe the bible, he healed the sick, cast out demons, healed the lame and blind, and even brought people back from the dead. He calmed the storms, provided food for the multitudes, forgave sins, all of these things shows his authority, his command over creation...and if you think that it is you who exercised your will to be saved, you are saying that God has authority over all things, except your will...that is the one thing in this world that can frustrate God, man's will. If that is the case, then why do you even believe, because the God you are claiming to believe is not worthy of belief if his plans, and if his will is frustrated by the will of the creature he created. It is nonsense. The same one who has authority over all of nature, and over the demons, and over the temple, is the one who has the authority to grant faith and repentance to whomever he so chooses. So I challenge you today, now that you have been confronted with this truth just as the sanhedrin were when faced with the truth of Jesus authority. What are you going to do with it? Will you believe? Or will you like the Sanhedrin, excuse it away.