**Uniquely Jesus** March 12, 2017

Mark 11:27-12:12

We’re going to jump over Mark’s description of Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem… and come back to it, on Palm Sunday.

But the remaining six chapters of Mark’s gospel, which is 40% of the book, focuses on the last week of Jesus’ life.

\* On Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem late in the day (Mark 11:11), riding on a donkey, in fulfilment of messianic prophecy.

After looking around at everything in the Temple, he and his followers went back to Bethany.

\* On Monday, on his way into Jerusalem, Jesus cursed a fig tree that had no fruit and upon arriving at the Temple drove out its moneychangers and merchandise sellers, keeping them out until evening. This too was in fulfillment of messianic prophecy (Isaiah 56:7-8). And at the end of the day, he and his followers again left Jerusalem.

\* The passage we study today – Mark 11:27-12:12 took place on Tuesday.

There is an important piece of information you need before we study it

*“In the years preceding Jesus’ ministry, the priestly leadership had become corrupt. Throughout the history of Israel, high priests were chosen by lot from among the Levites. But because King Herod was threatened by the power of the priesthood, he ignored biblical law, and he himself appointed the high priest.*

*The position was subsequently bought with bribes from wealthy Sadducean families, who agreed to keep peace with Rome in exchange for wealth from the temple tithes and the sale of sacrificial animals.*

*The priestly family that had been in power for many years in Jesus’ time was the house of Annas. Annas himself had served for 9 years as high priest before his son-in-law, Caiaphas, took over from him.*

*The family of Annas owned the flocks from which the sacrificial animals had to come. They also controlled the money-changing tables at the Temple, which were called “booths of Annas.” They charged inflated prices on sacrificial animals, extorted money, and stole offerings intended to support priests who had no other income.”* http://www.egrc.net/articles/director/articles\_director\_0305.html

When Jesus returned to the Temple on Tuesday, a large group was waiting to confront him– **Mark 11:27.**

The **chief priests** came – Caiaphas and Annas.

The **teachers of the law** came – those who interpreted the laws of Moses.

The **elders** came – those appointed to serve in the Sanhedrin, which was the ruling body of the nation.

These three groups held authority in the nation, regarding spiritual matters.

As expected, in light of what Jesus had done on Monday, their confrontation with Jesus focused on authority.

The religious leaders asked two questions – **Mark 11:28**.

1. **By what authority are you doing these things?**
2. **Who gave you authority to do this?**

Can you hear the accusation in their voices?

Coffee/Question:

Why did the religious leaders ask these questions?

They considered themselves to be in charge of the Temple.

But Jesus had acted as if he was.

Look at how Jesus “turned the tables” on them – **v.29-30**.

Jesus answered their questions with one of his own.

He promised them that if they answered his question, he would answer theirs.

Jesus’ question may seem strange: *“Was John’s baptism from heaven or from men?”* Let me give you two background pieces that hopefully will help you understand “why” Jesus asked this question.

1. Any baptisms or ceremonial washings were to be done in the temple area by a priest.

Where did John the Baptist do his baptisms?

Outside of the Temple – in the Jordan River and other places where there was water. **Who directed John to do so?**

1. John the Baptist was not a Temple sanctioned priest.

His father had been; but he wasn’t. **Who sanctioned John?**

Jesus’ question of the religious leader was also an authority question - by whose authority had John baptized?”

Look at the religious leaders’ discussion – **v.31-32.**

Because they feared the people, they were caught.

Only a few days earlier, after Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, and many had trusted in him, these same leaders had said, John 11:48: *If we let [Jesus] go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.*

In exchange for power, the religious leaders had promised the Romans they would keep the peace in spiritual matters, and if they said John’s authority was not from heaven…there was a real possibility that things could have quickly gotten out of hand.

The mood in Jerusalem at the best of times was volatile.

This is why those leaders said, in answer to Jesus’ question – “we don’t know.”

Since they didn’t answer Jesus’ question, Jesus didn’t answer theirs – **v.33b.**

The fact that a new chapter starts doesn’t mean the conversation of chapter 11 had ended. Jesus immediately told three stories – the parable of the two sons, the parable of the tenants and the parable of the wedding banquet – **12:1a.**

Mark recorded only the middle parable.

Matthew recorded all three.

Before we read Mark’s account of the second parable, I want us to read the first parable - **Matthew 21:28-32.**

Wow!

And then without a pause, Jesus told the second parable: **Mark 12:1-9a**.

Both Matthew and Mark recorded Jesus’ question – 12:9a: *“When the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”* Matthew 21:40

But it’s Matthew who tells us that the religious leaders answered that question.

*“He will bring those wretches to a wretched end…and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.”* Matthew21:41

They had been so focused on trying to find something with which to arrest Jesus, they hadn’t perceived the parables were about them!

As soon as they spoke their answer, Jesus immediately drove him his point.

**Mark 12:10a** - **“Haven’t you read this Scripture?”** What Scripture?

**Mark 12:10b-11**.

This quote is from Psalm 118:22-23.

The religious leaders had asked, “by what authority do you do these things?”

The parable of the tenants confirmed - Jesus considered himself to be who?

The vineyard owner’s son; he had acted on God the Father’s authority.

Quoting from Psalm 118 he additionally stated: “I am the capstone.”

I act with Messianic authority!

And then, drawing upon that divine authority, Jesus announced what would happen to them and the nation because of their rejection of him.

Matthew 21:43-44: *Therefore, I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.*

Jesus did not say this flippantly or callously.

Knowing the consequence of their rejection, is what had caused Jesus to weep before he entered Jerusalem two days earlier - Luke 19:41-44.

What Jesus saw and described, happened… 40 years later.

Acting on his Father’s authority, Jesus had cleared the Temple the day before.

He then confirmed that those who thought they were the powers that be, would become the powers that were, when God would give authority to the Romans… to drive out the nation.

I’ve said it before, but I need to say it again – when God gives opportunity, wise is the person who grabs hold of it. God’s mercy is great. But if it is rejected there will come a time when it is withdrawn.

How did the religious delegation respond when Jesus said these things?

As you can imagine - they were furious.

Instead of trapping Jesus with his words, he had trapped them with theirs.

But because the mood of the crowd, was for Jesus, they could do nothing.

**Mark 12:12.**

**What do we learn from this?**

**> It is common to struggle with the authority of Jesus.**

Do you know why that is?

1 John 3:4: *Sin is lawlessness.*

At heart, all of us are rebels.

The infection of sin has made us spiritual dissidents.

And part of every person’s struggle in coming to Jesus, is his insistence: “I will be the supreme authority in every aspect of your life.”

But doesn’t it make sense that the One who holds all authority in heaven and earth, would hold all authority in our lives?

Any person or nation can war against Jesus – but know this; he cannot be defeated. That’s the message of Psalm 2. That’s the message of the book of Revelation.

Does Jesus use his authority simply to dominate us?

No, the reason Jesus insists on holding authority over us, is because his salvation will undo sin’s infection and harm in every aspect of our lives.

His salvation is not partial – it is complete.

He comes into our lives to thoroughly renovate and make us new.

The longer we follow him, the more extensive his authority over us becomes, and the more we learn experientially, that his rule is good.

**> Jesus always uses his authority to advance; to reveal the glory of his Father.**

Why did Jesus drive the merchants out of the Temple?

Because - “this place is to be a place of prayer.”

Jesus’ great passion is that the glory of God be declared among the nations; among all peoples. Psalm 96:3

When it comes to the things that touch our lives, it is the glory of God that is always the deciding factor.

Jesus rules in our lives in order to make God known.

We are living temples.

Philippians 1:20: *…so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.*

Jesus’ desire is that even our deaths, would glorify God.

John 21:19: *…the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.*

> The fact that Jesus holds all authority in heaven and on earth, is the source of our peace.

Jesus is still in control of the earth, even when misguided, incompetent or evil people rise to power.

Ray Stedman writes, “Human authority is always limited as to duration.”

raystedman.org/new-testament/mark/by-what-authority

J.B. Philips wrote: “Remember that the powers-that-be will soon be the powers-that-have-been.”

The book of Habakkuk.

Habakkuk: O God - do something.

God: I am – I am sending the Babylonians.

Habakkuk: O God – how can you use them to accomplish your purposes?

They are evil.

God: I will hold them accountable for what they do.

Habakkuk: O God – I stand in awe of your deeds. I will wait patiently for the day of

calamity to come on the nation invading us.

All of us have a short window in order to make a difference in this world, including those who govern in whatever capacity Jesus permits them to govern.

Jesus determines when, where and for how long a ruler will govern.

See Acts 17:26.

Our closing song is an affirmation of our trust in the goodness of the One who is Ruler of all nations.

Fairest Lord Jesus, Ruler of all nature,
O Thou of God and man the Son,
Thee will I cherish, Thee will I honor,
Thou, my soul's glory, joy and crown.

Beautiful Savior! Lord of all the nations!
Son of God and Son of Man!
Glory and honor, praise, adoration,
Now and forever more be Thine.

Peter who is Mark’s source, quotes this same Psalm in 1 Peter 2:4-8:

*As you come to him****, the living Stone****—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—****5****you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual houseto be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

***6****For in Scripture it says:* ***“See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”***[Psalm 118:22]***7****Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe,* ***“The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”***[Psalm 118:22]***8****and,* ***“A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.”*** [Isaiah 8:14]

 parable, the parable of the two sons

We know they got the point regarding the parable. Look at 12:12.

They were seething inside.

If anyone could have read their minds – they wanted to arrest Jesus.

But in arresting him it was so they could kill him.

But they couldn’t – they feared starting a disturbance.

Mark recorded only one of the parables Jesus told.

There were actually three –