



The Story & Way of Jesus

The Problem with Authority

Mark 11:27-12:17

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Mark 11:27-12:17

They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you authority to do this?”

Jesus replied, “I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!”

They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' But if we say, 'Of human origin'" (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.) So they answered Jesus, "We don't know."

Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things." Jesus then began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed. "He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

"But the tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. "What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. Haven't you read this passage of Scripture:

"'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

Then the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.

Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. They came to him and said, “Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn’t we?”

But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. “Why are you trying to trap me?” he asked. “Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.” They brought the coin, and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?” “Caesar’s,” they replied. Then Jesus said to them, “Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” And they were amazed at him.

Mark 1:1

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Mark 1:27

“What is this? A new teaching—and with authority!” (exousia)

Mark 11:28

“By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you authority to do this?”

Isaiah 5:1-2

I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard:

My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside.

He dug it up and cleared it of stones
and planted it with the choicest vines.

He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well.

Then he looked for a crop of good grapes,
but it yielded only bad fruit.

The blessed idiocy of grace.

Mark 12:10-11

“The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
the Lord has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”

Mark 12:17

Then Jesus said to them, “Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” And they were amazed at him.

Late have I loved you,
Beauty so ancient and so new, late have I loved you!
Lo, you were within, but I outside, seeking there for you, and upon the shapely
things you have made
I rushed headlong – I, misshapen.
You were with me, but I was not with you.
They held me back far from you,
those things which would have no being,
were they not in you.
You called, shouted, broke through my deafness;
you flared, blazed, banished my blindness;
you lavished your fragrance, I gasped; and now I pant for you;
I tasted you, and now I hunger and thirst;
you touched me, and I burned for your peace.

- *St. Augustine*