

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 20TH–21ST, 2025 // GOSPEL OF MARK

## AUTHORITY (MARK 11:27–33) THE CHALLENGE (VS. 27–28)

Jesus enters the temple again, and the chief priests, scribes, and elders (representing the Sanhedrin) come to confront Him.

- They want to know who gave Jesus the right to cleanse the temple and upset their sense of institutional control (v. 28).
- Truth will always anger and bring criticism from those who fear losing control or status.

## TURNING THE QUESTION (VS. 29–30)

“Was John’s baptism from heaven or of human origin?” John the Baptizer was widely seen by the Jewish people as a great prophet of God, but John simply pointed to Jesus as Messiah.

- If the religious leaders acknowledged John’s authority as from God, they must accept Jesus as having authority from God too.
- Jesus was simply drawing out their motives.

John the Baptist said some provocative, radical, and controversial things, but ultimately, he preached in the wilderness and never turned over tables in the temple complex. He was geographically and institutionally removed.

- Jesus specifically confronted the sin of these leaders right there in the temple!
- We can listen to hard preaching, but it is quite a different thing to have our specific sins called out!

## FEAR OF PEOPLE OVER FEAR OF GOD (VS. 31–32)

Ultimately, people-pleasing and spiritual pride dominated the decision-making of these religious leaders.

- If they said John’s baptism came from Heaven, they would condemn their unbelief; if they said it came from man, they feared the crowd would turn on them. Pride and losing control often keep us from obedience and belief.

## SILENCE AND CONSEQUENCE (V. 33)

The leaders said, “We don’t know.” Jesus answered, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

- Willful unbelief that is rooted in pride and a fear of losing control close the door to further revelation of God’s truth.
- Do we even want to know the truth if the truth means we are wrong and need to change?

## A VINEYARD OWNER (MARK 12:1–12)

In Isaiah 5:1–7, God is described as a landowner and Israel is a vineyard that has been planted, cultivated, and given everything it needs to produce fruit.

- And yet, Israel had only produced bad fruit, going its own way time after time.
- So God pronounces the destruction of Israel because of their failure to produce fruit.
- Jesus’ parable is a bit of a sequel to Isaiah’s.

In Jesus’ parable, focus is on those to whom the vineyard had been rented—the tenants.

- The problem now is not with the vineyard. It is with the tenants of the vineyard.
- What is a “tenant”? It is someone who does not own the property but lives in or uses it.
- Tenants have the responsibility to take care of the property and steward it for their owner.
- If Israel is the vineyard, and God is the landowner...

The “tenants” are those who were entrusted with the care of God’s vineyard (Israel)—the leaders, priests, scribes, and elders.

- They were supposed to steward the covenant, teach God’s law, and lead the people in faithfulness to produce fruit.
- The owner of land carefully prepares a vineyard, rents it to some farmers, and leaves while he entrusts its care to them (v. 1).

When the time of harvest arrives, the owner of the vineyard sends servants to the tenants to collect what is due him (v. 2).

- One servant they beat, another they treated shamefully, and another they killed (vs. 3–5).
- Finally, he sends his son. Surely the tenants would respect the beloved son (v. 6)!
- But they also kill the son so they can seize the vineyard for themselves (vs. 7–8).

For the tenants, it is not about stewarding the vineyard for the owner—it is about control.

- The son’s appearance threatened their control.
- Through the parable, Jesus is calling out the poor stewardship and selfishness of Israel’s leaders, despite God’s extravagant blessing towards Israel.
- God had called Israel’s leaders to tend the vineyard so it would produce fruit for Him.

From time to time, God would send His servants (the prophets) to the people to collect fruit, but Israel mistreated the prophets.

- Jesus states that Israel’s leaders would mistreat Him too! They would cast Him out of the vineyard and kill Him as God’s beloved Son.
- Once more, Jesus provokes the crowd with a question: “What then will the owner of the vineyard do?” (v. 9a).

The answer is fairly obvious: He will punish the wicked tenants and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will honor him by giving Him fruit.

- Jesus then quotes Ps. 118:22–23 to connect the rejected son from the parable with the rejected stone of the Psalm.
- The stone the builders refused and rejected would be used by the Lord Himself as the chief cornerstone of the temple (v. 11).

The religious leaders rejected the Messiah, but God used what they rejected to lay the foundation for His Kingdom and bring His glory to the nations.

- The Church of Jesus is built on Christ, the cornerstone and foundation.
- Those who were entrusted to lead God’s people refused Christ, so the stewardship of the Kingdom would be given to those who believe and bear fruit through faith in the Messiah.

This parable is not saying God has rejected Israel. Far from it! Paul says in Rom. 11, “Has God rejected His people? By no means!” (ESV).

- Jesus is condemning the unfaithful leaders who refused to care for God’s vineyard and ultimately rejected the Son (v. 12).
- The stewardship of the Kingdom is moving to those who will produce fruit, but the root (the covenant God made with Abraham) remains.

## THE WARNING AND THE LESSON

Recognize God’s ownership and authority—God is the owner of our lives and all the resources He has entrusted to us.

- Don’t reject or mistreat God’s messengers when they come bringing a tough truth—we need to be held accountable, corrected, and warned.
- We will reap what we sow—fruitlessness, negligence, and rejection of God bring judgment.

## GIVING TO CAESAR (MARK 12:13–17)

The leaders in the temple were threatened by Jesus and were bent on destroying Him, so they hoped to trap Him into saying something that would permit them to arrest Him.

- But there was another reason for the questions, one that His enemies did not realize.
- Jesus was going to die as the Lamb of God, and it was necessary for the Lamb to be examined before Passover (Ex. 12:3–6).

If any spot or blemish was found on the lamb, it could not be sacrificed.

- Jesus was going to be examined publicly by His enemies, and yet they would not be able to find any fault in Him.
- Two opposing groups of Jews (Pharisees and Herodians) on opposite sides of a hot-button issue came together to ask Jesus an impossible question (v. 13).

The question was whether it was right under the Jewish law to pay what was probably the poll tax to Caesar, the Roman emperor (v. 14).

- If Jesus answered, “Yes, it’s right,” then He would side with the Herodians who supported Roman rule, making Him a heretic and enemy of the people.
- If Jesus answered, “No, it’s not right,” then He would side with the Pharisees who opposed Roman rule. Then the Herodians could arrest Him on charges of treason.

No matter how Jesus answered, He would lose. Either a “yes” or “no” would alienate a significant portion of His followers and might even get Him arrested by the Romans.

- Immediately, Jesus saw through this scheme and recognized their hypocrisy (v. 15).
- Each ruler minted his own coins and put his own image on them, so Jesus asked whose image was on the coin (v. 16).

If Caesar’s image was on the coin, then there was nothing wrong with giving back to Caesar what was Caesar’s.

- In other words, honoring certain obligations as a citizen of a nation does not indicate our ultimate allegiance.
- Paying taxes, obeying the law, and respecting earthly leaders is not a form of worship. It is simply rendering to them what is due as a resident of the nation they govern.

But on the other hand, we also have an obligation to “give...to God the things that are God’s” (v. 17).

- If a coin bears the image and likeness of a national leader, whose image and likeness does a human being bear?
- Therefore, we must honor and obey God first. We owe God EVERYTHING because we bear His image.

When they heard Jesus’ answer, they were utterly amazed at Him (v. 17).

- Why? Because they could not paint Him into a corner, get Him to play for their team, or make Him endorse their “tribe” and demonize their opponents.
- The authority and wisdom of Jesus transcend our political and ideological tribes. He is the true King and His is the true Kingdom.

## A QUESTION OF AUTHORITY

- Our understanding of anything in life (money, politics, sexuality, etc.) stems from our belief about what holds absolute authority.
- Is it the popular consensus of the culture at large? Our physical or emotional desires? What we prefer or want to be true?
- Or is it Almighty God and His Son Jesus Christ and what He has spoken through His Word?

## WHO HAS THE AUTHORITY TO CORRECT ME?

- If we have a belief system that never corrects us or tells us we are wrong, it may simply be self-affirmation disguised as truth.
- Often our unbelief and unwillingness to be corrected stem from a fear of losing control.
- Do we even want to know the truth if the truth means that we are wrong and need to change?

## WHO HAS AUTHORITY OVER MY VINEYARD?

- We all have a “vineyard” we’ve been entrusted to tend: our sphere of influence, resources (time, talent, treasure), family, friends, work, etc.
- The true Owner of our “vineyard” has entrusted it to us so we’ll bear fruit. Are we being faithful?
- He often sends His corrective messages to us so that we will bear more fruit. How do we receive the messages of truth God sends?

## WHOSE AUTHORITY AM I UNDER?

- We are to live under the authority of whomever God has placed over us (Rom. 13).
- Ultimately, we are to honor and obey God first because we were made by Him, belong to Him, and will one day stand before Him.
- We owe God EVERYTHING because we bear His image and He gave us everything through Jesus!
- What or who can honestly tell you that you are wrong and get you to change your mind, your heart, and your behavior?
- And if that were to happen, are you truly ready to listen?