

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 21ST, 2025 // GOSPEL OF MARK

AUTHORITY (MARK 11:27–33)

“BY WHAT AUTHORITY ARE YOU DOING THESE THINGS?”

11:19 tells us that Jesus would leave the city at night and return during the day. As He returns to Jerusalem, the chief priests, scribes, and elders want to know **what right He had to drive the money changers and merchants out of the temple.**

- Jesus did not come to debate but to teach them (11:17) about the good news.

THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS ARE TRYING TO TRAP HIM

The questioning of Jesus' authority from the religious leaders is very similar to the question asked in 2:7: **“Who can forgive sins but God alone?”**

- They wanted Jesus to deny His heavenly authority and claim to be a rogue figure who acted on His own. To say otherwise would be **viewed as an act of blasphemy.**

“... ANSWER ME, AND I WILL TELL YOU...”

Jesus was not avoiding their question, but as was typical for His style of teaching and for rabbis of this time, **He asked questions to guide people to arrive at the answer themselves.**

- The answers to our questions are important, but most often the path **that led us to a conclusion is equally important.**

“ANSWER ME.”

Jesus demanded a response from them on whether He was sent by God.

- Jesus demands a response and commitment from us. **We cannot remain neutral;** Jesus reveals Himself to us and **we respond with repentance or rejection.** How we respond points to whether **we will choose to commit to the Savior or to self.**

“THEY DISCUSSED IT AMONG THEMSELVES”

The leaders who often tried to trap Jesus had now found themselves in a trap.

- On one hand, if they said John's message was **from Heaven**, then **he was right about Jesus being the Messiah.** But if they said John's message was **of human origin**, then they ran the risk of offending those who viewed John as a prophet.

UNCOVERING TRUTH JUST TO COVER IT BACK UP

After much deliberation, the religious leaders simply answered Jesus with, “We don't know.” The reality is they did know, but they were scared to face the truth and admit they were wrong. They cared more about pleasing the crowd than they did about the truth.

- **All who seek truth will find it** (Matthew 7:7–8), **but it takes humility to possess it.**

REJECTED (MARK 12:1–12)

JESUS' USE OF PARABLES

Jesus often spoke in parables, which are stories told to illustrate a deeper spiritual truth. He often **used these stories to communicate a truth to those who were ready to hear it while allowing that truth to remain hidden to those who were not** (Matthew 13:10–16).

- **This parable was meant to reveal truth to the religious leaders, not veil it.**

CULTURAL RELEVANCE

This relationship in the parable between landowners and tenant farmers was common in Jesus' day.

- Archaeologists have discovered documents that point to disputes about land ownership transferring to the tenant farmers when the landowner had been absent for more than three years.

THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD OWNER

The **man** represents **God** because He was the one who **planted a vineyard**, which is **Israel.**

- The **fence, pit,** and **watchtower** probably do not have individual meanings but collectively **show the great care (protection and provision) the landowner has for the vineyard.**
- The **tenant farmers** are the **religious leaders** who were supposed to look after the nation of Israel.

THE LANDOWNER SENT SERVANTS

The **servants** sent to collect fruit are **the prophets**, who were sent repeatedly to call the people of God to repentance and restore them to holiness.

- However, their hostility grew towards the servants, **beating one, hitting another on the head and treating him shamefully,** and eventually **killing one.**

“HE STILL HAD ONE TO SEND”

The wording of the parable communicates that the **“beloved son”** was His only Son. There was a sense of finality in Him being sent.

- They treated the servants with contempt, but surely, they would respect the Son of the landowner. There was no one else to send, and **how they treated the Son would determine their fate.**

THE FOOLISH TENANT FARMERS

They thought by getting rid of the Son, who was the rightful heir to the vineyard, they would retain possession in the landowner's absence.

- The tenant farmers did not kill the Son because they misunderstood who He was. They killed Him because of who He was. **We don't reject Christ's teachings because we misunderstand but because we understand all too well.**

“HAVEN'T YOU READ THIS SCRIPTURE...”

They treated the Son disgracefully, so the landowner returned, killed the farmers, and gave the vineyard to others.

- Jesus quotes Psalm 118:22, the same psalm (Psalm 118:25) used to welcome Jesus into Jerusalem. With these words, **Jesus claimed divinity, pronounced judgment,** and said that **God's blessings were about to open to the Gentiles.**

IMAGE BEARERS (MARK 12:13–17)

THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY IS MY FRIEND

In a strange combination, **the Herodians and the Pharisees teamed up to trap Jesus.**

- The Herodians were Jews who supported the Herodian dynasty and worked with the Romans for political gain. The Herodians and the Pharisees, a religious sect within Judaism, were **able to work together because of a common enemy.**

“TO TRAP HIM IN HIS WORDS”

The religious leaders' earlier questioning placed them in a situation where either answer put them in danger, so they wanted to do the same to Jesus.

- By asking, **“Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not,”** they were trying to get Jesus to pick **loyalty to God or Rome**, trapping Him into committing **blasphemy or treason.**

JESUS IS NOT FLATTERED BY OUR WORDS

They flattered Jesus with words that were true but not to them. Jesus, knowing their hypocrisy, took in His hand a Roman coin with Tiberius's likeness on it, and said to pay taxes to the government which would soon pierce that same hand.

- **We have an obligation to the government** (Romans 13:6–7) **as long as it does not infringe on our obligation to God.**

“AND THEY WERE UTTERLY AMAZED AT HIM”

Jesus told them, **“Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.”**

- The coin belonged to Caesar because it had his image on it and should be given to Caesar. **We bear the image of God** (Genesis 1:27) **and should give ourselves** (Romans 12:1) **back to the one who created us.**

ASSESSING OUR MOTIVES

- Are we constantly looking for opportunities to debate someone or for opportunities to tell someone the good news? Is our goal to win arguments or to win souls?
- Are we attempting to flatter Jesus with the right words while our hearts are far from Him?
- **God is not mocked** (Galatians 6:7)!

WHOSE IMAGE DO WE BEAR?

- We are made in His image to reflect His image to the world.
- To be an image bearer is to answer the call to live a life of obedience to God, showing His love and nature to others.
- The way we treat one another is improved when we view every person as being made in the image of God.