



# gracefellowship

Mark: Following Christ to the Cross  
May 24, 2020  
A Question of Authority

Recognize Memorial Day and thank all who have sacrificed their lives for our freedoms.

Recognize people joining online and listening on the radio.

We are in a series following the life of Jesus and discovering the things that resulted in Jesus going to the cross. Last week we looked at Mark 10 where Jesus told the disciples that He was going to Jerusalem where He would be mocked, beaten, spit on and killed.

Now we have come to the final week of Jesus' life. He has come to Jerusalem where He was given a King's welcome as He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey with people waving palm branches and laying their coats on the ground before Jesus. The following day when Jesus came to the Temple he drove out the money changers and all those who were buying and selling. That made the religious leaders furious and Mark tells us that they wanted to kill Jesus. But because of the crowds that were following Jesus and their affinity for Him, no one could lay a hand on Jesus. So, they came up with another strategy: throughout the week they would try to challenge Jesus's authority and get Him to say or do something that would turn the crowds against Him.

Let's pick up the story in Mark 11 and see the first attempt of the religious leaders to challenge Jesus.

**:: Mark 11:27-33**

**27 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.**

**28 "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you authority to do this?"**

**29 Jesus replied, "I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things.**

**30 John's baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!"**

**31 They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?'**

**32 But if we say, ‘Of human origin’ ...” (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.)**

**33 So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.” Jesus said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”**

The religious leaders were not able to trap Jesus. In fact, he made them look silly in the process of their questioning Him. The religious leaders were trying to find out where Jesus got His authority, because they were concerned Jesus was going to do something to usurp their power and authority in the eyes of the people. So Jesus, seeing they aren’t going to engage Him with any sense of intellectual honesty, tells a story.

**:: Mark 12:1-12**

**1 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.**

**2 At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard.**

**3 But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed.**

**4 Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully.**

**5 He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed.**

**6 “He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’**

**7 “But the tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’**

**8 So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.**

**9 “What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.**

**10 Haven’t you read this passage of Scripture: “ ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;**

**11 the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”**

**12 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.**

Here’s what we immediately notice in this passage: Jesus is speaking in a parable, which means that the story he tells has a deeper meaning and the characters and locations in the story all represent other people and things.

Jesus is borrowing from an OT passage the people would have been familiar with, but He is going to put his own spin on it. In Isaiah 5:1-7 we see what would have been a very familiar passage for Jesus' audience.

**:: Isaiah 5:1-7**

**1 I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside.**

**2 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.**

**3 "Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard.**

**4 What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad?**

**5 Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled.**

**6 I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briers and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it."**

**7 The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the nation of Israel, and the people of Judah are the vines he delighted in. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.**

In this account God is the farmer who planted a vineyard- the nation of Israel. But what He had intended to produce healthy grapes had yielded bad fruit. Israel as a whole had not remained faithful to God in a way that revealed the truth of who He is to the world. As a result there was often discipline and punishment against the nation.

Jesus takes this prophecy from Isaiah and repurposes it as a parable, not to speak against all Israel, but against her leaders. Look again at the parable Jesus tells and let's break it down together.

**"A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower.**

Here's the first thing I want you to see: The vineyard owner provided everything necessary for the success of the vineyard.

- Planted the vines
- Provided the equipment needed to harvest the grapes and produce wine.
- Provided security by building a wall and a watchtower

Many of you are planting gardens right now and are going to great lengths to make sure your tomatoes and cucumbers and whatever other nasty vegetables you're growing will be able to thrive.

**The first thing we see is that God is gracious.**

He is a life-giving God who has cultivated everything necessary for life to thrive.

**Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place.**

Then the owner of the vineyard rented it out to some farmers/tenants and moved to another location. This would have been common practice in the first century. Wealthy families would have an investment and then leave it for others to manage on their behalf while the family didn't even live in the area.

This is a great responsibility because people who own businesses like this have high expectations for their investment to yield a return. For those who would be left in charge there were basically two options held in front of them:

1. Manage things well and find great reward.
2. Manage poorly and receive terrible consequences.

Let's find out what happens with the farmers in our story.

**:: Mark 12:2-3**

**2 At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard.**

**3 But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed.**

At the appropriate time, the owner of the vineyard asks for what is rightfully his. And notice Jesus says he only asks for *some* of the fruit! The stewards, who had done the work and taken care of the investment, would receive the lion's share. The owner just wants a portion of the harvest. But the owner is denied what rightfully belongs to him. Not only that, but His servant is beaten and sent away with nothing.

Now, you might expect if someone did this to you that you would immediately get the local authorities or get your own posse and go take care of the farmers who have rebelled against you.

**The second thing we see about God is that He is patient.**

**4 Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully.**

**5 He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed.**

How long would it take you to move with force against someone who was mistreating your representatives? The way they treat the servants reflects their feelings toward the Master. They have no respect for the one who gave them authority and put them over the vineyard. In case you're having a difficult time figuring this out

- God is the owner of the vineyard.
- Israel is the vineyard.

- The farmers are the religious leaders of Israel.

The question you have to ask is, “why would the farmers behave this way?” In the time of Jesus if someone could take control of a piece of land and keep it for 3 years it became their land. The longer the farmers keep control of the land, the more likely it is they become the owners and no longer have to yield to the true owner.

**6 “He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’**

The patience of God is extended one more time as He says, I’ll send one more representative. I’ll send my Son. They’ll respect Him. Let me tell you, as a Father myself, if I knew how my other representatives had been treated, when it came time to send my son, I would send him with an armed escort! God doesn’t do that. Instead, He sends His Son, Jesus to earth to show us the grace and mercy of the Father, hoping we will recognize Him as our one hope to restore our broken relationship with God.

Remember, what I told you a minute ago, if someone could keep control of a property for 3 years they took legal control of it. I think it’s fascinating that the earthly ministry of Jesus last 3 years. And now He is in Jerusalem as the representative of God to try to turn people back to God. Either they would yield to Jesus or they would reject God’s final offer for peace.

Quote:

**“If you do not hear the well-beloved Son of God, you have refused your last hope. *He is God’s ultimatum.* Nothing remains when Christ is refused. No one else can be sent; heaven itself contains no further messenger. If Christ be rejected, hope is rejected.” – Charles Spurgeon**

This truth applies to you and to me today. You may be living in complete rebellion against God, and yet He continues in patience to offer you opportunities to submit to Him and find salvation through a relationship with Jesus.

You have to ask yourself if you will accept or reject God’s final offer- His Son- knowing peace with God can’t be gained any other way.

Let’s see what the farmers do when the Son shows up.

**7 “But the tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’**

**8 So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.**

**9 “What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.**

Think about how crazy this line of thinking was: the tenants believed that by killing the son they would gain the inheritance! What parent in their right mind would hand over the inheritance to the people responsible for killing their child? We have seen examples of people in courtrooms forgiving the person who murdered a loved one. But I've never seen anyone say, "When you get out of jail all my inheritance will come to you now!"

**The third thing we see about God is that He is just.**

Jesus answers the question His audience would have been asking: The owner was patient with the farmers when his other servants were mistreated or killed, but what is he going to do now that it's his son?

"He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others."

It's important for all of us to understand this today: God's patience only extends so far! As a parent I like to think of myself as being pretty patient with my sons. I can ask them nicely multiple times to do something and not lose my cool. But the one thing that really makes me lose it with my kids and move into discipline mode is when their actions impact my wife negatively! Once the things they are doing cause Heather to become frustrated I have to deal with them more definitively.

God is the same way with us. He will be patient with you as you search out truth and look into the claims of Jesus. But His patience only goes so far. When you stand before God you have to have this issue nailed down.

When it comes to you personally and the question of authority, what place does Jesus have in your life?

Jesus ended the parable by quoting another passage of Scripture, Psalm 118.

**10 Haven't you read this passage of Scripture: "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;**

**11 the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"**

**12 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.**

The cornerstone is the most important stone in the foundation of a building. It has to be completely level and set perfectly or the rest of the building will be off.

When the religious leaders heard all these things Jesus had said, it wasn't lost on them that He was talking about them! The religious leaders had rejected Jesus- they wanted to arrest Him and kill Him, but even in those actions, He became the cornerstone of a new building- the Church.

Now each of us has to ask the question today whether or not we have yielded to the authority of Jesus or if we have continually rejected Him wanting to control our own lives and position ourselves as god.

Jesus has come to be the cornerstone of your life and faith. If you are not building your life on Him you are building on a foundation that can't support you. Let today be the day you answer the question: What place of authority does Jesus have in my life?

- Pray leading people to respond to Jesus as Savior.