

Many years ago I was talking to a medical missionary working in the jungles of Peru. She said her missions agency had recently made contact with a remote tribe of people who had never heard the gospel. Through the patient persistence of some faithful missionaries the chief of the village sat down and received the Good News. He listened carefully, thought for a while and then stood up and walked away. The missionaries interpreted this as rejection. So they were very surprised when the chief made contact with them and asked to speak to them again. At their next meeting the chief said very simply, "I have spoken with my people and we want Jesus to be our owner."

I wonder if you want Jesus to be your owner. We all need Jesus to be our Savior, we need a Helper, a Provider, a Friend, even a Leader. But is Jesus your owner? I hope when you consider the passage before us today that you will move that title to the front of the list. It is impossible to be a follower of Christ without first settling the issue of authority.

Mark 11 records that Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey to begin the final week of His life on earth. A few common folks greeted Him as He made His way up to the temple to make a guest appearance. Apparently, the ranking members of the Jewish religious establishment were a no-show. So, on Monday, Jesus returned to make His presence known. Flipping over the tables of the local merchants will do that. On Tuesday He returned to the scene of the crime and this time the Jewish leaders confronted Him. In the process, they made two fatal mistakes in their response to Jesus:

1. They rejected the authority of the messenger of God... Mk. 11:27-33. Of course this is not really a question is it? This sounds like a logical question but it is actually an emotional reaction to the fear of losing control and losing their way of life. This is very common when people are confronted with the truth of God's word.

- "Well, what about the dinosaurs?"

- "How could a whale swallow a man and survive?"

- "How could there be one God in three persons or how could Jesus be fully God and fully man at the same time?"

These are all valid questions – sometimes. But other times they are used to cloak the fear of transferring the title deed of my life to Jesus.

There is another fear that comes to the surface in this encounter – the fear of losing face...v. 32. The Pharisees allowed the fear of what others thought to paralyze them. So Jesus answers the question with a question that, in effect, is an answer in itself. Jesus says, “I won’t answer your question directly but let me tell you a story then, you decide.” Mk. 12:1-9.

2. The second fatal mistake of the Pharisees is that they rejected the authority of the Son of God. That’s the point of the story and it is very similar to the story found in Is. 5. God planted Israel and expected good fruit. After all the work He did to insure a harvest all He got was worthless, wild grapes. Last week we read about the fig tree that was cursed by Jesus because it yielded no fruit. The chosen people of God were to be a light of revelation for the Gentiles but they actually became obstacles to their worship. God is very concerned that the lives of His people reflect His nature and His purpose.

Jesus confronts these religious leaders because they not only reject the message of God and the messenger of God but they actually stand in the way of those who seek God.

⁴⁷ Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. ⁴⁸ So you are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build their tombs. ⁴⁹ Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,’ ⁵⁰ so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, ⁵¹ from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation. ⁵² Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering.” Lk. 11:47-52

Their guilt was multiplied by the fact that they not only rejected the message of the prophets but they even hindered others from hearing their words. Those who were assigned to be the messengers of God to the people of God were using the blessings of God to make themselves God. Anyone who rejects the authority of God is guilty of the same sin as those in this judgment parable.

If Jesus is my Owner then my life is not my own. If Jesus owns everything, then I own nothing. My body is not mine. I don't have right to do what I want with my own body. My money is not mine. I don't have a right to do what I want with my money. My life is not mine. I don't have a right to live my life any way I choose.

Is Jesus your Owner? Does He have authority over your life? Is your sexual behavior under the authority of Christ? "That's my business." Is it? Does your checkbook reflect obedience to Christ? How about your calendar? Do you have habits that you wouldn't want Jesus to observe? "Do you embrace the authority of Jesus or resist it?" The question is not, "Do you believe in Jesus? Are you saved? Have you asked Jesus into your heart?" The question is, "Is Jesus your owner?" Anyone who rejects the authority of the Son of God will be rejected by God. And we are all guilty. But I have good news.

3. The stone that was rejected is the rock of our salvation... Mk. 12:10-12. This is a quote from Ps. 118:22-23 that includes the words the people were shouting as Jesus entered the city. The priests of Israel cast Jesus aside like an annoying pebble in their shoe but, in a marvelous reversal, that pebble became a cornerstone of God's eternal temple. The cornerstone is the most important stone in any structure. It could be the capstone on a column, the keystone in an arch or the cornerstone of a foundation providing stability and symmetry.

God's message still goes forth. God's Son still appeals to us in His great love. In the words of a well-known pastor in a previous century, "If you reject Him, He answers you with tears. If you wound Him, He bleeds out cleansing. If you kill Him, He dies to redeem. If you bury Him, He rises again to bring us resurrection. Jesus is love manifest." Charles Spurgeon