

Introduction: Pg. _____

“Cornerstone”
Mark 11:27-12:12

In 2008, the Millennium Tower in San Francisco was completed. Like many skyscrapers, it is a beautiful and majestic tower, standing 645 feet, as the 6th tallest building in the city. But there is one massive problem.

Since its construction, uneven building settlement has caused the tower to lean 17 inches. Due to the unacceptable rate, engineers devised a plan to drill support piles on two sides of the building to support the foundation. They predicted this maneuver would actually cause increased settlement at a rate of one additional inch, per year. To their alarm, they hit the one inch mark three months, increasing the lean of the tower by 5 inches to a total of 22 inches, causing them to shut down the project and bring in outside consultants. (<https://apple.news/AJ63x8Q0LQEqVke7E4ulCdA>)

I don't know about you, but if I'm a resident of this leaning tower of San Francisco, I am probably looking for another place to work and live!

This crisis highlights what you and I already know: every building needs a firm foundation. This crisis reminds us of another, greater truth: every life needs a firm foundation!

In Mark 11:27-12:12, Jesus presents himself as the firm foundation we desperately need. His words should lead us to this life changing conclusion...

The Point: If Jesus is the cornerstone, build your entire life on him.

At the end of chapter 11, we encounter a group of people who were not interested in making Jesus the cornerstone of their lives. They believed he was a fraud. They accused him of doing the work of God through the power of Satan. They viewed him as a threat, a blasphemous false teacher who must be removed.

That is why they sought to ask Jesus questions that would illicit an incriminating response. They wanted to trap him in his words, but Jesus perceived their malicious intent.

Mark 11:27-33 (text displayed)

This marks the first of six controversial engagements Jesus has with the religious leaders.

We find Jesus and his disciples walking into the temple on the Tuesday before Passover, the Tuesday before he would be crucified.

The Question of Authority

We must not forget this is the day after Jesus came through the Temple like a lightning bolt, overturning tables and denouncing those who turned God's place of worship into a marketplace for unjust gain. Those provocative actions led to a visit from chief priests, scribes and elders, the three groups who made up the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court of Israel's religious establishment.

They asked Jesus: “By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?” In other words, “Tell us who gave you the right to come into the Temple yesterday and say what you said and do what you did.”

The issue of authority runs throughout Mark’s gospel. If Jesus is the Son of God, as introduced in the opening words of the gospel, then he must possess divine authority, and his authority has been on full display throughout Mark’s recording of the good news of Jesus Christ.

- Jesus does not simply have authority over what happens in the temple (11:12-19).
- Jesus has authority over sickness (1:29-34)
- Jesus has authority over demons (9:14-29)
- Jesus has authority over nature (4:35-41)
- Jesus has authority in his teaching (1:27)
- Jesus has authority to ignore the tradition of the religious leaders when they contradict the Word of God. (7:5-13)
- Jesus has the authoritative audacity to reinterpret the Sabbath in relationship to himself as “the Lord of the Sabbath.” (2:27-28) And if that isn’t audacious enough for you...
- Jesus has authority to forgive sins! (2:10)

JESUS HAS COMPLETE AUTHORITY.

What a perfect opportunity for Jesus to recount his authority.... but he didn’t take the bait. He knew if he said, “I am the Son of God, the Messiah sent to deliver God’s people,” they would have immediately charged him with blasphemy and arrested him.

That’s why he answers their question with a question in verses 29-30...

Jesus said, “I can play this game, but in the process I will expose your insincerity and unbelief.”

Can you see them?... Staring at one another... Some calculating a response. Others fuming, with smoke coming out of their ears, because they had already calculated and knew Jesus put them in a dilemma. “If we say heaven, we’re exposed as hypocrites because we did not accept John. If we say man, we’ll turn the people against us, because they all believed John was a prophet sent from God.”

Verse 33: So they respond: “Jesus, we’re not sure. We’ll need to get back with you another day.” Jesus says: “So will I.” :) HA!!

BUT... for those of us who have followed Mark’s story, Jesus actually provides a veiled answer. He answers their question in an indirect way. How? By asking about John the Baptist. Think about it: all of the people held to be a prophet, which means that they believed John’s words were true. We then ask: “What did John the Baptist say about Jesus?”

- “He’s so great, I’m not even worthy to untie his sandals. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” (Mk 1:8)
- “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29)
- “He must increase, but I must decrease. (John 3:30)
- “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord.’” (Mk 1:3).

The John you reject is the John who told everyone about my authority. I have the authority to do whatever I want, because I am the Christ, the very Son of God.

T: And Jesus wasn't done. He then takes the offensive in the argument with a parable that would be plain to everyone, including these religious leaders.

Mark 12:1-12 (text displayed)

A parable is a story that communicates spiritual truth by way of analogy. The parables of Jesus ultimately make one key point. Here, the point is found in verses 10-11, "I am the cornerstone, rejected by you but sent by God."

To get to his point, Jesus tells an intricate story with several allegorical features. In other words, the key features and characters in the story represent what is happening in Jesus' life and ministry.

Let me share those with you from the outset and then we'll walk through the story.

The Parable of the Tenants

- **Vineyard = God's People (Israel)**
- **Owner of the Vineyard = Father**
- **Servants = Prophets**
- **Tenants = Wicked Religious Leaders**
- **Son = Jesus**

The setting of a vineyard would have been immediately understood by those who heard, not only because it was common to see people growing a large number of grapes, but also because this imagery is prominent in the Old Testament, where God says his people are like a vineyard.

Jesus says God's vineyard was being cared for by tenants. God the Father, the owner of the vineyard, entrusted the care of his people, his vineyard, to tenants. In this case, the tenants are the religious leaders. They are the ones who are supposed to teach God's people God's ways. They are the ones who should be looking for and able to recognize when all of God's many promises about his Messiah are being fulfilled. They are the ones who should have been shouting "HOSANNA!"

But... when it was time for the owner to get his share of the fruit in verse 2, we see the tenants had other plans.

Look at verses 2-5.

- We see a clear progression of mistreatment of God the Father's servants. The servants represent the prophets God had sent to his people to guide them in his ways. The first is beaten. The second shamefully abused. The third is killed!
- The end of verse 5 says this happened with many others. Some were beaten. Some were killed.

- We should pause and consider the actions of the owner. If we are being honest, the actions of the owner seem illogical, if not irresponsible! What owner would continue to send servants to be beaten? What owner would send servants to be killed?
- Can we agree? It makes no sense! [This detail has led some to question the historicity of the story.]
 - But this is the story of the OT.
 - Hebrews 11 tells us that prophet after prophet was mistreated and abused, imprisoned, beaten, stoned, killed by the sword, sawn in two. (Hebrews 11:32-38)

The owner of the vineyard, God himself, is either irresponsible in his thinking or he is outrageous in his LOVE.

Make no mistake: God's love and grace ARE WILD! His patience and mercy ARE SCANDALOUS!

Bob Stein says, "What some criticize as absurd and unrealistic is in reality the inconceivable 'amazing grace' of God!" (BECNT)

But we haven't reached the pinnacle of the scandal that is the love of God. Verse 6.

- "He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' BUT those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' And they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard."
- God has not simply sent messenger after messenger to warn his people, teach his people, guide his people. He sent his beloved Son. The sending of his Son only heightens the drama.
- Verse 6 is a clear allusion to God the Father, sending his Son, Jesus. It is a clear allusion to the Father's voice at Jesus' baptism: "This is my *beloved Son*, with whom I am well pleased." (1:11)

To reject the Son is the ultimate rejection of the Father. This rejection brings God's just consequences. You will lose your position of leadership over my people. You will face ultimate judgment because you rejected my love and provision of life through my Son.

The point is made in an unmistakable fashion by Jesus in verses 10-11. He quotes Psalm 118:22-23. He begins by saying: "Have you not read this Scripture..." A stinging indictment! Why? Of course they read it... everyone knew Psalm 118. They sang it as they came into the city. They had just shouted portions of it as Jesus rode into the city! Jesus is saying, "You've read it, but you have not understood!" Understood what? WHO I AM!

"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;"

Who is the stone? Jesus. Who are the builders? The religious leaders. How important is Jesus? He is the cornerstone, the stone by which everything stands. Remove the cornerstone, we're not talking about a building leaning 22 inches. We're talking about it falling to the ground.

Jesus is saying to to everyone and he is speaking to us today: "I am the cornerstone."

CONCLUSION

In the quietness of these moments, I want to ask you: are you building your life on Jesus Christ? How firm is your life? When the winds come, how secure is your soul? How strong is your relationship with God?

Danny Akin, humbly states: "I understand Jesus is talking at this moment to the religious leaders of Israel, and yet, I must confess, I see all of us in this crowd as well."

The Point: If Jesus is the cornerstone, build your entire life on him.

You say, "Tanner, how would I know if I'm doing that?" 4 words... "To live is Christ."

Take in inventory of your life (your actions, your priorities, your conversations, your dreams) and ask yourself: is my life completely about Jesus?

Is there any question in peoples' minds that Jesus your greatest priority? Does your commitment to Jesus influence all other commitments (your work, your family, your friendships, your pursuits in life)?

Are you increasing living like Jesus? Do you think how he thinks? Act how he acts? Want what he wants? Feel how he feels? Love what he loves?

Discipleship (following Jesus) means this: we are all in, all the time.

My greatest prayer for our church: A group FULL of PEOPLE PASSIONATELY PURSUING GOD.

In Isaiah 5:4 (the backdrop for Jesus' parable), God asks this question: "What more could have been done for my vineyard that I have not done for it?"

Here's the answer: Nothing. God has done everything. He has given us everything in the giving of his Son. Jesus gave it all. He bled and died in your place. The only thing left for us to do is receive him and build our lives on him!

Here's the result: Marvel. Verse 11. "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes."

PRAYER