

Mark 11:27-12:12 “When Religion Confronts Jesus”^{**1}

Series: “*Mark: The Servant in Action*”

Main Idea: In Mark 11:27-12:12 we see two scenes of confrontation involving Jesus. Both teach us much about the Savior and about ourselves. In scene one, religion confronts Jesus. In scene two, Jesus confronts religion.

- I. Religion confronts Jesus (11:27-33).
 - A. The religious leaders challenged Jesus’ authority (27-28).
 - B. Jesus exposed their authority problem (29-33).
 - 1. They saw themselves as being okay.
 - 2. They refused to consider their need to change.
- II. Jesus confronts religion (12:1-12).
 - A. He tells a story about a vineyard (1-8).
 - B. He gives the punch-line (9-11).
 - 1. God is taking the kingdom from Israel.
 - 2. God is giving the kingdom to the nations.
 - C. He is forcing His hearers to face reality (12).
 - 1. The story teaches us about God.
 - ⇒He is longsuffering and merciful.
 - ⇒He is also just and righteous.
 - 2. The story teaches us about Jesus.
 - ⇒He confronted sinners because He loved His Father.
 - ⇒He confronted sinners because He loved sinners.
 - 3. The story teaches us about ourselves.
 - ⇒We are born with an authority problem.
 - ⇒We are prone to take God for granted.

Take Inventory: What is your response to God’s Son?

It’s always a joy to open God’s Word with you, that we might better know and worship the Giver of the Word, and this morning it’s a special privilege to return to the Gospel of Mark. We began in 2022, calling it, *The Servant in Action*. I’ve entitled this morning’s message, “*When Religion Confronts Jesus*.”

You would think that religious people would be the *most* receptive, but they’re not.

At a recent prayer meeting, Pastor Jamel Attar in France, a former Muslim from North Africa, shared with us an interesting observation. He said that when he first came to France and met real Christians, he discovered a big difference between Islam and Christianity. It has to do with how we view *sin*, and deal with it.

“I learned from the Bible that, for God, sin is a big deal. As a Muslim, I just did good deeds and I was okay with Allah. I read the Koran, etc. But I learned from the Bible that for God, sin is a big deal.”

Of course, what he learned was that, according to the Bible, we sinners can’t remove our sin by merely doing a few (or many) good deeds. God is holy and must punish sin justly. Thankfully, because He is merciful, He has provided a way for sinners to be forgiven. Not by their works, but on the basis of the work His Son accomplished.

I’ve been thinking about Jamel’s observation and am convinced he is not alone. There are many people who call themselves “Christian” who have a similar view of sin. Sure, we all sin, they say. Not good, but not really a big deal. God understands. Just do a few good things and God will let it pass. Like pray a prayer to Jesus. Attend church.

^{**}Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For a previous look at this passage, see the Mark series in 2004.

Give some money. Try to do better next time. Do that, and God will forgive you. That's the essence of their Christianity.

In other words, add some religion to your life (especially church, Bible, prayer), and God will accept you. But is that true? What does God think of religion? Jesus Himself is about to show us.

One of the greatest mission fields in the United States is not *out there*. It's people who this weekend are sitting right in here, in church buildings, and synagogues, and mosques. It's not the irreligious (sure, they don't have God, and know it), but the religious. It's to those who are convinced they are right with God that Jesus now speaks.

Scripture Reading: Mark 11:27-12:12

When it comes to relationships, there are basically three kinds of people in the world.² There are peace-breakers, peace-fakers, and peace-makers.

The *peace-breakers* are instigators, fighters, combative folks who seem to enjoy stirring up conflict. The *peace-fakers* are those who hate conflict and will do anything to avoid it, including pretending like things are okay just to "keep the peace." And then there are the *peace-makers*. They understand that peace does not just happen but takes work. Problems must be faced and dealt with. That's what they do. They, by God's enablement, work at *making peace*.

Jesus Himself said, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God (Matt. 5:9)." He is the ultimate peacemaker. It's why He, the God-man, came into the world, so that He might reconcile sinners back to God and to each other. He Himself is our peace, says Ephesians 2:14. He made peace by removing the barrier of sin through the shedding of His blood.

This reality is what makes today's text shocking to some people. Jesus, the peacemaker, is also a confronter. It's true that sinners loved to be with Jesus, but not all sinners. Sinners who did not see themselves as sinners resisted Him. And when they did, they saw a side of Jesus we hear little about, Jesus the *confronter*.

In Mark 11:27-12:12 we see two scenes of confrontation. Both teach us much about the Savior, and about ourselves. In scene one, religion confronts Jesus. In scene two, Jesus confronts religion.

I. Religion confronts Jesus (11:27-33).

Verse 27 begins, "And they came again to Jerusalem." It's Tuesday morning of Passion week. Good Friday is coming. Just two days prior, when Jesus entered Jerusalem riding the foal of a donkey, the Jewish crowd cheered. On the next day, Monday, Jesus entered Jerusalem, went to the temple, and cleaned house, overturning tables, and putting a halt to the religious farce.

Then He left the temple. Mark says, "as it was already late" in 11:11. And I don't think he means merely that it was late in the day. Things are coming to a head in the divine plan.

The following day, Jesus and the Twelve walked back into Jerusalem, specifically into the temple courts. It's there that the confrontation occurs.

Barclay describes the scenery in the Court of Gentiles. "It was a magnificent arcade made by Corinthian columns 35 feet high. The one on the south was even more splendid. It was called the Royal Cloister. It was formed by four rows of white marble columns,

² See Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker*

each 6 feet in diameter and 30 feet high. There were 162 of them. It was common for Rabbis and teachers to stroll in these columns and to teach as they walked.”³

It was there beneath those columns that the religious leaders approached Jesus. They’re not there to chit chat. They’re fuming, and their anger is laser-focused on one topic. *Authority*. The word “authority” appears four times in verses 27-33.

A. The religious leaders challenged Jesus’ authority (27-28). “And they came again to Jerusalem. And as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him, ²⁸ and they said to him, ‘By what **authority** are you doing these things, or who gave you this **authority** to do them?’”

Please realize, these men are not after information. They’re trying to trap the Lord. They ask two questions, and both have to do with Jesus’ *authority*. “By what *authority* are you doing these things?” “Who gave you *authority* to do this?”

Authority to do what? To do what Jesus did the previous day, to turn over tables in the temple, to accuse us of turning the temple into a ‘den of robbers.’ Who gave you *authority* to do all this?!

It’s significant that they don’t challenge *what* Jesus did, just the basis of it. They couldn’t deny the corruption that existed in God’s house, nor that what Jesus did was quite necessary. What they want to know is who authorized *Him* to do these things? This was *their* jurisdiction, and they didn’t like anybody interfering with their religious system, corrupt as it was.

Jesus responded to their questions with a question of His own in verses 29-30, “Jesus said to them, ‘I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me.’”

Interesting response. At first glance we might conclude that Jesus was avoiding the issue. Not so. Jesus didn’t avoid the issue. By asking this question He raised THE issue.

And what is the issue? The issue is *authority*. These men have an authority problem, and Jesus is about to put it on display for all to see.

B. Jesus exposed their authority problem (29-33). Keep in mind who Jesus is addressing. These are the chief priests, the teachers of the law (known as the scribes), and the elders, the three groups that made up the Sanhedrin, the high court of the Jews. As far as first century Jewish religion goes, these guys *are* the authority. They call the shots. They determine what’s right and wrong for the Jews. They are the gate-keepers, the standard-bearers. They ask the questions, and no one questions them.

But Jesus did. He asked them a very pointed question. *Was John’s baptism from heaven (that is, from God), or from men? Answer me!*

He’s talking about John the Baptist, the God-sent prophet whose assignment it was to prepare people for the Messiah. John preached a message of repentance. And he called people who repented to be baptized, to go into the water, under it, and out of it, to symbolize their desire for God to change them.

“I baptize you with water for repentance,” John had said in Matthew 3:11. In Acts 19:4 Paul explained, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.”

Later in this service, we will witness people being baptized. This is a different baptism. This is Christian baptism. Those going into the water are individuals whom

³ William Barclay, p. 278.

God has saved, who have repented and placed their faith in the One who saved them, the One to whom John pointed, Jesus the Christ. “He has come, and we believe He died for our sins, and rose from the dead for our salvation,” they will say by word and action through Christian baptism.

John’s baptism was preparatory. He pointed his listeners to Jesus, as Mark 1:7 indicates. “And this was his message: ‘After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.’” When the Baptizer saw Jesus he stated emphatically, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).”

This is what John did, and it didn’t phase him who was in the audience, whether Jewish peasants, or Roman soldiers, or religious leaders from the temple. They all came, and he called them all to repent, and prove their repentance by being baptized.

Is Jesus skirting the issue by asking this question? Not at all. This *is* the issue. If someone had really listened to John the Baptist, if in obedience he had gone through the waters of baptism signifying his agreement with John’s message, he would have been ready for Jesus. The same authority that sent John also sent Jesus.

These Jewish leaders rejected John as a fanatic, thus rejecting the authority of God. It’s not surprising then that they’ve become both prosecuting attorney *and* judge with Jesus. They have an authority problem! These religious leaders refuse to submit to any authority other than their own.

They’re not alone. It’s the problem we all have, from birth. This is God’s world. He made it. He’s the authority. But we all go our *own way* (Isa. 53:6). We want to do what *we* want to do with our lives. And we resist anyone, including the Messiah Himself, who interferes with our self-focused agenda.

And this is especially true for religious people, for we use our religion to convince ourselves that *our* way is indeed *God’s* way.

So what happened? Notice verses 31-33, “And they discussed it with one another, saying, ‘If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’³² But shall we say, ‘From man’?”—they were afraid of the people, for they all held that John really was a prophet.³³ So they answered Jesus, ‘We do not know.’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.’”

Now who’s skirting the issue?! “We don’t know,” the religious leaders said.

That’s not true. They knew the answer to Jesus’ question, but they are not about to give it. They’re lying. They’re lying because they don’t want the Jewish laity to know the truth about what they think about John the Baptist. They’re *peace-faking*, at least for now. In two days, they’ll show their true colors and start *peace-breaking*.

But why? Why are these religious leaders so antagonistic with Jesus? To put it simply, it boils down to two realities.

1. *They saw themselves as being okay.* Again, they have religion. They are *priests*, men who worked in the temple for a living, *chief* priests in fact, men who were the most reputable servants of God (or so everyone thought). And they are *teachers of the law*, men who had studied the Scriptures and instructed others in the same all their lives. And they are the *elders*, the respected authorities of the Jewish people. These men aren’t *sinners*, but *good men*.

And that’s why they rejected John the Baptist, and now Jesus. Good men don’t need to repent. They are *good* men, and proud of it! Consequently...

2. *They refused to consider their need to change.* That's why, when Jesus asked them a question that forced them to be honest about their spiritual condition, they gave in to their fear of man and resorted to deception. "We don't know," they said, refusing to come out from their hypocritical masks.

A person who sees himself as being okay will refuse to admit his need to change, every time. That was true of the majority of religious leaders in Jesus' day. It's also true of many religious people in our day. Perhaps you, my friend. Unless we're willing to be honest with ourselves, we'll never admit our utter sinfulness. And unless I admit that I am a wretched, hell-bound sinner, I will never admit my need for the Savior. And unless I admit my need for the Savior, I will remain in my sins, refuse to repent, and then perish eternally.

This is why Jesus began His Sermon on the Mount with these words. "Blessed are the *poor in spirit*, for their's is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:3)." In order to experience God's kingdom, there's a very simply prerequisite. One must first admit one's spiritual bankruptcy. And that's something religious people refuse to do, to their own condemnation, apart from the miraculous intervention of the grace of God.

Barclay comments, "The whole story is a vivid example of what happens to men who will not face the truth. They have to twist and wriggle and in the end get themselves into a position in which they are so helplessly involved that they have nothing to say. The man who faces the truth may have the humiliation of saying that he was wrong, or the peril of standing by it, but at least the future for him is strong and bright. The man who will not face the truth has nothing but the prospect of deeper and deeper involvement in a situation which renders him helpless and ineffective."⁴

Kent Hughes tells the following story about an African chief who visited a mission station: "Hanging outside the missionary's hut on a tree was a little mirror. The chief happened to look into the mirror and saw her reflection, complete with terrifying paint and threatening features. She gazed at her own frightening countenance and started back in horror, exclaiming, 'Who is that horrible-looking person inside that tree?' 'Oh,' the missionary said, 'it is not in the tree. The glass is reflecting your own face.' The African would not believe it until she held the mirror in her hand. She said, 'I must have the glass. How much will you sell it for?' 'Oh,' said the missionary, 'I don't want to sell it.' But the woman begged until he capitulated, thinking it might be best to sell it to avoid trouble. So he named a price and she took the mirror. Exclaiming, 'I will never have it making faces at me again,' she threw it down and broke it to pieces."⁵

That's exactly what religion does to Jesus. See these men in Mark 11. They want desperately to get their hands on Jesus, not so they can see the truth about themselves, but so they can crush Him under their feet and not have to face the condemning truth He is revealing to them.

So, how do we help people like this, people who refuse to admit the truth about themselves? Let's watch how Jesus did it, and let's not let the unfortunate chapter break in Mark's gospel keep us from seeing the connection. At the end of Mark 11, religion confronts Jesus. At the beginning of Mark 12, Jesus confronts religion.

II. Jesus confronts religion (12:1-12).

⁴ William Barclay, p. 280.

⁵ Kent Hughes, *Mark*, p. 189.

Watch how He did it. Verse 1 says, “And he [right after this refusal to face the truth] began to speak to them in parables.” Earlier in His ministry, Jesus used stories to teach truth. Here He uses stories to confront His critics with the painful truth they’d been refusing to face. Mark indicates the Master told them *parables* (plural), but includes only one of the stories in this narrative (we see others in the parallel accounts).

A. He tells a story about a vineyard (1-8). Let’s listen to the story in verses 1-8, “A man planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a pit for the winepress and built a tower, and leased it to tenants and went into another country.² When the season came, he sent a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard.³ And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed.⁴ Again he sent to them another servant, and they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully.⁵ And he sent another, and him they killed. And so with many others: some they beat, and some they killed.⁶ He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’⁷ But those tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’⁸ And they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.”

This story, though foreign to most of us, actually reflects a common scenario in first century Israel. Much of the land was in the hands of absentee landowners who contracted with tenants on a crop-sharing basis.⁶

Again, this is a parable. It’s an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. It uses the known to communicate the unknown. It takes something the hearers can easily picture to help them see spiritual truth they need to picture.

A man planted a vineyard. It’s his vineyard, so obviously the fruit will be his.⁷ He takes steps to ensure there will be fruit, putting up a wall and building a tower for protection. He hires farmers to care for His vineyard. They agree on their wages. The terms of the contract are clear.

But in time, they break the contract. They’re not satisfied with a percentage. They want the whole thing for themselves. What’s worse, they’ll willing to take drastic action to satisfy their greed. They beat servants, not once but repeatedly. They even kill servants. Then worst of all, they conspire and kill the owner’s son.

Some parables are difficult to interpret. Not this one. It’s so plain that Jesus’ hard-hearted critics get the message, as we’ll soon see. The owner of the vineyard represents God. The vineyard represents Israel (this is a common image for Israel in the Old Testament; see Isaiah 5). The tenants represent the religious leaders. The servants are the prophets. The son is The Son, Jesus Himself.

The story of the vineyard is the story of Israel. God formed the nation of Israel for His purposes, to bear fruit and display His glory to the world. He gave Israel everything necessary to produce a good crop.

But Israel got it turned around. Israel started treating God as if He existed for them. Israel’s leaders started robbing God of His glory. God sent prophets to them to call for a harvest, but they beat them, and even killed them.

Tradition says Isaiah was sawn in half. Zechariah was stoned to death. Jeremiah was thrown into a pit. John the Baptist was beheaded.

⁶ Wessel, p. 731.

⁷ Leviticus 19:23-25 explains that a farmer would not use the fruit until the fifth year.

Finally, God sent His Son, His beloved only Son, to His vineyard Israel. But those who should have known better, the religious leaders, rejected Him. “Come,” they said, “let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.” They chose the vineyard (their religion) over the One who created the vineyard and entrusted it to them.

They actually took the Son, killed Him, and mercilessly threw Him out of the vineyard. Unthinkable, but true. A deadly plot that’s already in motion. In just two days, these religious leaders will have Jesus arrested, subjected to a mock trial, beaten, and then on the next morning, executed.

B. Jesus gives the punch-line (9-11). In verse 9, “What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.”

What else can the owner do? His tenants obviously broke the contract. They’ve rejected his authority, and spurned his mercy repeatedly. They even killed his son. And they did it all thinking he would do nothing in return.

They thought wrongly. Jesus says that the owner will take two drastic steps to deal with the wicked tenants. One, He will come and destroy them. And two, He will give the vineyard to others.

What? Give it to others? How can it be? Here’s how. Jesus gives evidence to support His punch-line. He cites the very authority His critics prided themselves in knowing. He quotes the Scriptures. He says in verses 10-11, “Have you not read this Scripture: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”

The passage Jesus quotes is Psalm 118:22-23, part of the Hallel Psalms. It’s worth noting that the Jews were singing this Messianic psalm during this very Passover week. In fact, the cry of “Hosanna!” and “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” (which the people shouted on Palm Sunday) also came from Psalm 118.

What is Jesus saying? He is making two bold predictions.

1. *God is taking the kingdom from Israel.* “He will come and kill those tenants.” Israel’s leaders rejected God’s Son. Therefore, God is rejecting Israel’s leaders. But it goes further. It wasn’t just Israel’s leaders. *Israel* rejected God’s Son. The people followed their leaders.

As the apostle John explains, “He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him (John 1:11).”

Israel rejected the Messiah, and in so doing, brought about their own destruction. In less than a week, the Stone the builders rejected became the cornerstone when He walked out of His tomb alive. Indeed, this was the Lord’s doing, and it was marvelous in our eyes.

This too was the Lord’s doing. Forty years later, in AD 70, the Romans destroyed this city, including the temple, and the nation of Israel ceased to exist.

This is Jesus’ first bold prediction. Because of Israel’s unbelief, God is taking the kingdom from Israel.

2. *God is giving the kingdom to the nations.* “He will...give the vineyard to others,” says Jesus. To whom is Jesus referring? Who are these “others”?

In Matthew’s parallel account we hear Jesus saying these additional words, “Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, **and given to a people producing its fruits** (Matthew 21:43 ESV).”

As we read the book of Acts, we discover that's exactly what happened. For the first decade or so, the church was basically comprised of believers in Christ from a Jewish background. But then it shifted to the Gentiles. The Holy Spirit began to work with and through non-Jews to produce a harvest in the Owner's vineyard.

He gave the vineyard to others, to the nations in fact. Indeed, by the time Jesus is done building His church, there will be people from every nation, language, and tribe.

Listen to the new song they're singing to Jesus in heaven in Revelation 5:9–10, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

You might ask, "Is God through with Israel?"

That's the very question Paul addresses in Romans 11:1–2. "I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.² God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew."

Yes, He gave the vineyard to others. But, no, He's not done with the original tenants. He's actually using the new tenants to stir the hearts of the previous tenants.

Paul explains this further in Romans 11:11–12, "So I ask, did they [Israel] stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!"

So, why did Jesus tell this story? It boils down to this.

C. He is forcing His hearers to face reality (12). Just like the mirror to the African chief, this parable forces Jesus' religious critics, and the rest of us, to see the truth about ourselves. How did they respond?

Verse 12 says, "And they were seeking to arrest him but feared the people, for they perceived that he had told the parable against them. So they left him and went away."

This story isn't just for the men standing in the temple that day. This story is for us, and it teaches us about three vital subjects.

1. The story teaches us about God. The owner of the vineyard sent a servant. The tenants beat him. The owner sent another servant. The tenants beat him. It happened again and again and again. Finally, he sent his son, and they killed him. What does this teach us about God?

First of all, it teaches us that He is *longsuffering and merciful*. According to a traditional Hebrew story, Abraham was sitting outside his tent one evening when he saw an old man, weary from age and journey, coming toward him. Abraham rushed out, greeted him, and then invited him into his tent. There he washed the old man's feet and gave him food and drink.

The old man immediately began eating without saying any prayer or blessing. So Abraham asked him, "Don't you worship God?"

The old traveler replied, "I worship fire only and reverence no other god."

When he heard this, Abraham became incensed, grabbed the old man by the shoulders, and threw him out his tent into the cold night air.

When the old man had departed, God called to his friend Abraham and asked where the stranger was. Abraham replied, "I forced him out because he did not worship you."

God answered, "I have suffered him these eighty years although he dishonors me. Could you not endure him one night?"⁸

Martin Luther said, "If I were God, and the world had treated me as it treated Him, I would kick the wretched thing to pieces."⁹

Thankfully, God isn't like us. Indeed, He is longsuffering with us, and so merciful. If He ever treated us as we deserved, for just one split second, we would perish forever.

Charles Spurgeon observed, "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 resurrection. Jesus is love made manifest."¹⁰

Indeed, God is longsuffering and merciful. But know this. He is also *just and righteous*. This, too, we see in the story.

"What will the owner do? He will come and kill those tenants." Beloved, today is the day of salvation, but if you reject God's Son, there is no hope for you. You will experience the just and eternal judgment of a holy God. Please, stop presuming upon His mercy. Come to the ark of safety while the door is still open, for as in the days of Noah, the day is coming when God will shut the door and destroy those who refused His merciful offer.

2. *The story teaches us about Jesus.* Think about why Jesus dared to tell this story in the first place. Didn't He know it would infuriate the Jews and bring out their worst hostility against Him? Yes, He knew. Why then did He confront them?

For two reasons. First, because He loved His Father. It was His Father's will that He come to earth, proclaim the truth, call sinners to repent, and then die in the place of sinners. It was the Father's will that He then conquer death and thereby reconcile sinners to their Maker. Jesus didn't live to please men, but only His Father. That's why He confronted them, because He loved His Father.

But there's a second reason. He confronts sinners because He loves sinners. I love this about Jesus, don't you? He doesn't tell us what we *want* to hear, but what we *need* to hear, for our good and the glory of God.

Several years ago, when he was still alive, my father went to his doctor, to check out a dark mole growing on his chest. He eventually removed it, and biopsied it. "It's melanoma cancer," he said. "I need to remove more tissue."

Why would a doctor use a knife to inflict pain on someone? Love doesn't hurt people, does it? We know it does.

I'm thankful for doctors that take dark skin blotches seriously. I'm eternally thankful for a preacher that took my sin blotches seriously and told me the painful truth about my condition. And most of all, I'm thankful for the Savior who took my sin seriously, paying its penalty in full.

Is the Savior confronting you about your sin today? Don't resist Him. He's confronting you because He loves you, and there's no greater love than His!

3. *The story teaches us about ourselves.* First, it teaches us that we are born with an authority problem. It's why we disobeyed our parents when we were growing up. It's

⁸ [Thomas Lindberg](#).

⁹ Taken from Kent Hughes, p. 97.

¹⁰ Taken from Kent Hughes, p. 97.

why we still don't like to be told what to do today. We resist any authority outside of ourselves. We want to be boss, even though when we captain the ship it always sinks.

We need to face the facts. We are born with an authority problem. Can we change? Yes, and we must. How? By turning to Him.

Take Inventory: What is your response to God's Son?

This morning we've seen religion confront Jesus, and Jesus confront religion. When confronted by the truth, the Jewish leaders clung to their self-righteousness and rejected the Savior. Let's not commit the same crime.

Let's humble ourselves today. Let's admit the truth about ourselves. Let's run to Jesus today, not away from Him. Let's submit to His good and gracious authority.

Before we close the Book, there's one more nugget of truth to consider. God gave His vineyard, Israel, everything she needed to produce a wonderful harvest. But Israel began to love the gift more than the Giver.

We can relate, can't we? God gives us a family. That's a good gift for sure, but if our family becomes more important to us than worshipping God, something's wrong. He gives us jobs and healthy bodies so we can work. Good gifts, yes. But when our jobs become so important to us that we miss worship services, we've elevated the gift above the Giver.

Beloved, God gives us good gifts, not so we can worship them, but so we can steward them well for His glory. Listen to commentator J. D. Jones:

"The parable insists...that privilege carries with it responsibility. If God lets out a vineyard, He expects fruit. That is to say, gifts and privileges are all for service and use. God expects a return for them... It does not matter what the privilege may be. One man's gift may be wealth, and another's may be learning, and another's may be leisure. It matters not; God expects wealth, learning and leisure to be used for His glory, for the good of men."¹¹

My friend, religion never produces a good steward. Only Jesus can do that.

Closing Song: #405 *"My Faith Has Found a Resting Place"* (all four verses)

Baptism

Additional congregational singing (while those baptized change)

Right Hand of Fellowship

Benediction of the month: Revelation 11:15b (NIV84) "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

New members to be presented to the church for right hand of fellowship on September 3, 2023

**baptized on Sept 3, by Pastor Matt (voted on by congregation last week on August 27)

Aliya** & Adree** Bradley

Jeremy and Dee Dee Travis (already baptized)

Aaron Picklesimer (already baptized)

¹¹ J. D. Jones, p. 440.