

The Real Jesus, Mark 11:27-12:12, “The One About the Vineyard Workers”, 11/6/22

Name announcement. You should have received an email from the deacon board with an update on the church name. Thanks for your input over the last 9 months or so...we have made the decision that we will be using our shorter name- Brandywine Valley Church going forward in our communication. Our full name hasn't changed, but you will start to see our shortened name beginning to show up in print, signage, online, etc. over the next couple months. Prayer.

Any of you suffer from allergies? What is your allergy? Apparently, you can develop an allergy at any point in life, even if you don't have any right now...which is exciting to look forward to. Of course we know now that what's happening is that our immune system is taking a natural or good thing like pollen, peanuts and treating it like it's a bad thing. Sometimes this can be extreme- did you know there are rare instances of people allergic to water than under prolonged contact can actually be fatal?

This seems like a fitting analogy to explain the reaction of the religious leaders to Jesus throughout the Gospel of Mark. It's like they are allergic to Jesus. At every turn they are reacting negatively to his teaching, his miracles, his mission, his very presence. Even symptoms like breaking out in sweats, getting red in the face, shortness of breath...And this allergy has gotten worse and worse over time, they've hit their breaking point at we saw last week in Mark 11:18 they began plotting his demise...4 days later he will be arrested. Now what is it about Jesus that gave them such a strong allergic reaction against him? Well Mark reveals the answer here in 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?”* The allergic reaction to Jesus was not because he fed the poor, healed the sick, or talked about peace and love...no one is allergic to that Jesus, we love that Jesus...they were allergic to his claim of authority. All throughout Mark's gospel, this is the issue. There was something utterly unique about Jesus' authority. *Mark 1:21 The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the teachers of the law.* This is what drove the religious leaders crazy. The religious leaders believed they had the claim of authority, because they had the proper training, they were from the right lineage, they were credentialed, they held the seats of religious power, they set the standards. And they loved everything that came with their authority, the last thing they wanted was their power and control called into question and threatened. And this is exactly what Jesus was doing. But before we go judging these guys too harshly, don't many people today, maybe even some of us, have an allergy to Jesus' claim of authority in our lives and our world today?

Blank Now some of us think we don't have issues with authority, until it shows up on your doorstep. One time at my former church, it was one of these megachurches, and we had a couple hundred staff at the time, and we were going through a reorg. And lots of people we complaining about it and arguing...and I was like, “These people need to suck it up. Don't they see this is necessary.” Thinking that may area of course was fine just the way it was. Until the

next day they reorg my ministry and staff and I wasn't having it. Now most of the authority we are familiar with we might call structural authority. People or systems who are able to establish rules and expectations and hold people accountable within their scope of power. Think our justice system, law enforcement or CEO and the board at your company. But the kind of authority that Jesus claims is cosmic authority: The power and right to define reality and hold the world accountable to it. This is encapsulated in his title LORD. THIS is what we are allergic to. This is especially true in modern America. This is why our celebrated mantras today are "Be true to yourself." And "Don't let anyone tell you what to do." We want to be our own authorities. The captains of our own ships. And it's rooted in the notion that we think we know better than our creator what is good, true and what will make us happy. What we call independence the Bible calls rebellion. This is the human instinct ever since the Fall in Genesis 3. It's the story of humanity encapsulated in the younger brother in the famous parable, who wants to get out from under the father's house and rules and claim independence. And this is why you may find our study in Mark particularly unsettling. Because it becomes quite clear that Jesus claims authority in our lives, for our ultimate happiness and eternal good, but nevertheless, interferes with what we want. He interferes with the purpose of our lives, our allegiances, what we do with our money and possessions, our relationships, how we treat people, our habits and passions...I'm mean everything!

So back to our text: The question that the religious leaders pose to Jesus, is an allergic reaction to his claim of cosmic authority in their lives. Who or what gives you the right to tell me what to do? And it's the same allergic response that we all tend to have to Jesus. And either we will reject Jesus' cosmic authority in our lives to our own folly and destruction, or we will embrace his cosmic authority in our lives, to our ultimate good and eternal joy. So let's look at how Jesus responds to this question and then see what it means for us today.

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!"

Jesus could have been straightforward, but he appeals to logic and reason by asking a test question about John the Baptist. There was no doubt among the Jews of Jesus' day: John the Baptist was a genuine prophet, sent by God. And his baptism in the wilderness was preparing people's hearts through repentance to receive the Messiah. Here's the logic: If John was sent by the cosmic authority of God and John points to Jesus as the Messiah, then Jesus comes with cosmic authority from heaven. 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." Notice that "We don't know" doesn't mean "We don't know." But rather a "We won't say." The problem isn't not having enough evidence or knowledge. The problem is they can't admit because they won't submit. They refuse to acknowledge the truth because it would demand that they bow their knees to Him.

Now it seems that Jesus doesn't answer their question, but he does...he just does it through a parable. *"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. The parable in context is very clear. Just as the tenants wanted to claim authority of the vineyard for themselves and didn't want anyone coming to exercise authority over them, and were willing to even kill the beloved son in order to attempt to keep it, the religious leaders attempted to claim cosmic authority for themselves and were willing to kill Jesus to attempt to keep it. Of course, they were so blinded by their lust for authority they could not see their how foolish they were nor the destruction that would await them.

And then Jesus steps out of the parable to quote Psalm 118, as a way of again, providing evidence to the religious leaders of their willful ignorance. *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'?"* The cornerstone is the first stone that gets laid in building a structure, upon which every other stone finds their placement and position. The religious leaders rejected Jesus cosmic authority, but Jesus is the stone upon which everything is built upon and in whom everything holds together.

So how will the religious leaders, whom Jesus is directing this parable to, react? *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. Ironically, the pharisees don't understand any of Jesus' other parables but this one? This one they understand clearly, they may have even experienced conviction, but they were hardened by their own claim to

authority. More of the truth didn't change them, if anything it hardened their hearts in an equal and opposite way. What a sad and sobering reality willful blindness is, and these leaders would have to stand to answer before a holy God.

This is as far as we want to go in the text because we want to spend a few minutes talking about us today. This story is in the Bible as a wakeup call to us. An opportunity not to miss and a warning to heed.

An opportunity not to miss: Jesus stands ready to answer our question about his cosmic authority, do we want to hear the answer? Jesus offered a legitimate, rational response that gave these religious leaders everything they needed to believe that Jesus was Lord, the son of God, the Messiah. They had everything they needed to bow their knee to Jesus' authority and give their whole lives to worship and obedience to him.

We tend to well I still have lots of unanswered questions. "I need more evidence." "Oh it's all too complicated" or "You mean to tell me Jesus is the only way? I just don't like that." When I press that response and say, "Well, what have you done to research those question? What are you reading? 99% of the time they can't say anything. Friend, we have access to everything we need today to make a rationale decision about who Jesus is and to bow our knee to Him as savior and Lord. I could stand up here all day and give evidence after evidence...not to mention all the evidence you can't test but you can feel- that he has pursued you, the time he saved you from that accident, or the recurring dreams you have had, or all those Christians that he keeps putting into your life...just that fact that you are here today or you happen to be watching right now. I believe if you are really honest with yourself, the real issue is not lack of evidence, it's our allergy to his claim of cosmic authority over your life. And if this sermon is a bus. For some of us. This is our stop. We want off at this point. We don't want him messing with our lives. There is no halfway with Jesus. He says he's the way, the only way, truth and the life. He doesn't want to be added to a little corner of your life, he wants to be the cornerstone of your life upon which everything else is built. This is your opportunity not to miss. Don't wait another day. He's calling to you, if you seek him you will find him. And if you are already a Christian, the question for you is, what area of your life have you still been claiming authority over?

But here's Jesus' **warning to heed:** Beware of hardening your heart to the truth. The landowner gave the tenants multiple opportunities to repent and bow their knee, God gave the Israel so many opportunities to repent and bow their knee, Jesus gave these religious leaders so many opportunities to repent and bow their knee...but more truth did not result in softened hearts but further hardened hearts until it was too late, they sealed their fate. Unless the woings, encouragements, and proofs and the warnings of God's Word soften your heart and bring you to faith, they will harden your heart and turn you against him. This is why the writer of Hebrews says if you hear the truth of the Word today, do not harden your heart.

There is a cure for your allergy to authority. His name is Jesus! It is terrifying to give allow someone to have this kind of authority in your life. What if they abuse it? What if they ruin your life? What if you are miserable or they tell you to do something that you think would make you

unhappy. But if that authority is good. Loves you unconditionally. And has your ultimate joy at heart? And the power to make your ultimate joy a reality? Then you why wouldn't you give over everything to that authority? This is who Jesus is.

John 3:16-18 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. It is an issue of authority. And until we bow our knee to the authority of Jesus...we will be just like these tenants, just like these religious leaders. Today is the day. Do not harden your hearts.