The Gospel of Mark – Part 41

Authority and Accountability – Mark 11:27-12:12

Mosaic Rockford – Dave Spooner – July 5th, 2020

Intro:

- Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey at the start of the Passover week celebration (which was a Sunday). That night, Jesus looks over the temple and then stays with His disciples overnight in the nearby town of Bethany. On Monday, Jesus and His disciples head back into the city of Jerusalem. On the way, Jesus cursed a fruitless fig tree and then cleansed the temple and proclaimed, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers” (Mark 11:17-18 ESV).
- On Tuesday morning, they headed back to Jerusalem and the temple. Along the way, they noticed the tree that Jesus had cursed had “withered away to its roots” and Jesus taught them about the power and purpose of prayer.

Mark 11:27-33 ESV

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?” 29 Jesus said to them, “I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. 30 Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me.” 31 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.”

- Those who were given the responsibility to watch over and produce the fruit of God’s house were furious over what Jesus had done in cleansing the temple. They wanted to know, by “whose authority” did he do these things – what right did he have to do what he did? They saw themselves as the authority or the owners of the temple, whereas the truth is that they were just the stewards of the temple and they were under the authority of the real owner and His word. God and His word is the final authority, and the church must function under and according to His word and authority.
- Jesus did not answer their question outright but asked them a question in return, and if they had answered His question, then He would answer theirs. He knew that they saw themselves as the authority and they did not recognize any other authority other than their own, so in asking them a question in return, Jesus was getting to their hearts and exposing what was there. They loved their authority and position of power and they did not want to
lose it. They thought they were there because the people wished it so, verses that God called them to their position to steward the word and work of the Lord.

- Because of the perfection of God, He always works in making us more like Him. This is His goal and He will give us what we truly need, not what we ask. God asks us questions for our good, and He is just, loving, and wise when He asks us these things. God is under no obligation to answer our questions but uses them to reveal our hearts.
- Jesus next told a parable that described the hope, kindness, severity, and ultimate triumph of God when it comes to His will being done. In it we understand the heart of God and from this story, it is best if we deeply understand the authority and accountability of God.

**The hope of God**

Mark 12:1 ESV

And he began to speak to them in parables. “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.

- The “man” who planted this vineyard was God. The vineyard is the people of Israel, the people of God (Isaiah 5:1-7). God put a “fence around it”—He gave them His word and He gave the law, and it was to be a protection for them, and it also was a line of demarcation as to who was “in” the care of God and who was outside of it.
- Now the purpose of the vineyard was to produce fruit. God made it clear that this was His intention for them to do so (for this is the reason you grow anything). He gave them what they needed to produce this wine by giving them a winepress as well. He also built a tower that provided a vantage point to see all that there was in the vineyard, so they could watch over it and take care of it and protect it and produce from it. *(God has given us everything we need for life and godliness—2 Peter 1:3.)*
- He then handed the care of His vineyard over to others. He leased it to them. He did not sell it to them. The builder was still the owner, and those who were given to look over it were the stewards. It was not theirs, but it was given over to them. There would be mutual benefit for their work: they could live there and benefit from it, however they were ultimately responsible to the one who owned the place and they were to do what He had intended for them to do.
- God had given them everything they needed to do His will, and He had an expectation and hope that they would indeed do so. This is the good provision of God, and we in turn, have a responsibility to use what he has given to produce the good fruit that He intends *(Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more—Luke 12:48).*
- The hope of God is followed by the kindness of God by repeatedly sending His servants to His vineyard.

**The kindness of God**

Mark 12:2-8 ESV
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.

• When it was time to gather the fruit of His intention, He sends His servants. The tenants, instead of living up to their end of the bargain, betrayed and beat these servants and sent them away empty handed. Again and again He sent His servants, and they struck, treated them shamefully, and killed them. (Think of Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, Malachi, etc.)
• Finally, after sending all these servants, the owner sent His “beloved son,” thinking “they will respect my Son.” But the tenants, those who were given the responsibility of tending the vineyard and producing the fruit, saw this as an opportunity to take the vineyard for themselves. They wanted it for them, that they were the owner, and it was for them. That they would be the authority and they can do with it as they pleased. They wanted their will to be above the creator and owner of the vineyard. This, by the way, was the same sin of Satan, who saw himself above God and wanted the glory of the kingdom for himself.
• Jesus, talking about the Son, was actually talking about Himself and what they were indeed going to do to Him. They would take Him and kill Him and throw Him out of the vineyard. Then Jesus told them how the real owner would respond. He told them in a way that brought empathy, truth and justice to the response of the owner. The owner is justified in doing what He was going to do.

The severity of God

Mark 12:9 ESV
What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.

• And indeed, this is what God did and this is what God does. First, He does this to those who are overseeing His vineyard. They are the ones that He holds most accountable, and they are the ones who will pay the highest of prices. God is serious and severe when it comes to His will and His word. He will show patience and He will show kindness, but we must give an account to Him, and He is just and powerful. Second, the vines themselves will be examined for fruit, and if there is some they will be pruned and tended to, and if there is not, they will be removed. (Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit- John 15:2 ESV.)
• Both the vine keepers and the vines will be attended to. This is very real and scary stuff, and we must pay attention to it. There will be an accounting of what we have been given and what we have done with it.
Heb 9:27 ESV
it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment

2 Cor 5:10 ESV
For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Rom 14:12 ESV
So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Heb 4:13 ESV
And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

The triumph of God

Mark 12:10-11 ESV
Have you not read this Scripture: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; 11 this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes”?

- God, in the end, will triumph. His good will will be done. Even in the rejection of the Son of God, He has become the cornerstone, the most important stone in which everything is built upon and built from.
- Even though they would kill and crush Jesus, the will of the Father was done, and it was His doing. And it should be marvelous in our eyes.

Prov 21:30 NIV
There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the Lord.

- His good, perfect and marvelous plan will be accomplished. We either build our lives upon the rock or be crushed by it.

Luke 20:18 ESV
Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”

- It is better by far to build your life upon Christ and the word of God, then to reject Him and build your life upon another foundation. The word of the Lord will prove true, and it is what will ultimately judge or justify us.
Jesus then told this parable:

Mark 12:12 ESV

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.

- These “keepers of the vineyard” understood what Jesus was saying, however, even with this warning they wanted to take Him down. Again and again we read that they feared the people more so than they feared God. They did so because they wanted their power and position more than the presence and the praise of God. This is so very tragic, indeed.

Conclusion

- Know that God’s good plans will be fulfilled. Nothing and no one will overcome them.
- Know that God gives us everything we need to do His will, and is persistent, patient and powerful.
- Know that we will each give an account to God. Build your life upon His word, submit yourself to the word and live account to it. Produce the fruit of the Spirit that God has designed and desired for you.

Eph 2:10 ESV

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.