

Rejecting Loving Authority (Matthew 21:23-46)

Here we have a mega confrontation between Jesus and the usual antagonists (religious leaders)

- Happens as Jesus is teaching in the temple courts (informal affair)
- Deep symbolism (God's Lamb being observed in God's House) (w/o blemish; connection)
- But, God's house (**the temple**) had crooked managers (**chief priests and the elders of the people**)
- They come to question and challenge Jesus' **authority**
 - Because Jesus had clearly taken **authority** in the **temple cleansing**, displayed it on the mount (**His entry**), demonstrated it in the **healings**, and in the withering of the **tree**, and He was teaching and **taught** as one having authority (didn't quote/build on rabbis)
- It was a question of credentials (they were the authorizing body)

They will reject His authority...

- But not because it wasn't believable; rather because their hearts were sinful
- This is **willful** unbelief that **chooses** not to believe because it **does not want** to live under Christ's authority
- Last week and "**belief**" involving trust; and trusting that God is good in all that He does

Verses 23-27

- The **chief priests and the elders of the people** question Jesus
 - We already know their motives (**John 11:53**, NIV)
- Jesus also knows their motives and knows that if at this moment He claims His divine authority they will accuse Him of blasphemy (which they will do, but the time is not yet)
- So Jesus asks them a question that puts them in a profound dilemma
 - If they were to answer that **John the Baptists ministry** was from God then they would have to accept that Jesus was from God since John the Baptist was primarily announcing His coming!
 - They would have to **cease** the inquisition, **repent** of their motives and plot and **follow** Jesus!
- They give a dishonest answer when they say "**We don't know**" (v. 27)
 - **Because they were choosing to reject Jesus' authority, they were forced to function in dishonesty**
- So, since they would not answer His question, Jesus does not answer theirs
 - But, he is not merely being evasive
 - He will answer them in the parables He gives next
 - In a sort of vivid, historical, narrative approach that is both enigmatic and robust
 - He chooses to use story rather than statement

Verses 28-32 (The Parable of the Two Sons)

- The **first son** represents rebellious sinners that **repent** (Cf. **tax collectors and prostitutes**)
- The **second son** represents **duplicitous** people or religious **fakers** (Cf. **chief priests/elders of the people**)

The story Jesus tells is obvious. He asks, "**Which o f the two did what the father wanted?**"

- They knew the answer immediately (**The first**)
- Jesus explains to them the **implications** and **identifies** them as the **duplicitous religious fakers**

"**Entering before you**" (v. 31) was a sobering revelation

- I.e. **The tax collectors and prostitutes** as the **least deserving** and **most unexpected**

He answers their question in a subversive way

- He says that those who believed John were **entering the Kingdom of Heaven**, thereby stating that **John's ministry was** indeed **from God** (Cf. previous exchange)
- He tells them that John came to **show them the way of righteousness... that was Jesus!**
- **So, when Jesus claims that John's ministry was from God, He is claiming there that His authority is from God**
- He answers their question... but in provocative way!
 - He just preached the gospel to them and revealed profound Kingdom truth
 - "**Even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe**" (willful refusal; not faith)

Verses 33-46 (The Parable of the Tenants)

Jesus now tells them a parable that outlines all of Israel's history with God

- The **landowner** who plants a **vineyard** is representative of **God and the vineyard of Israel**
 - **Isaiah 5:7 and 1-4**, NASB
- The **farmers** represent the religious leaders that Jesus is speaking to
 - They were the ones who were supposed to care for the **vineyard (Israel)** and yet were accountable to the **landowner (God)**
- The **servants** the landowner sent to collect the fruit represent the prophets God had sent to Israel over the centuries (including **John the Baptist**)
 - What did the tenant farmers do with the servants?
 - Ignored their purpose and abused and even killed them
 - In a couple of days/chapters Jesus will say to these same guys explicitly what He is saying in a veiled way now (**Matthew 23:37**, NASB)
- Then, Jesus talks about **the landowner sending his son** (who does that represent?)
 - After all the prophets and ways God spoke, Jesus is the ultimate (**Hebrews 1:1-3**, NIV)
 - And what did they do with the son?
 - = Jesus revealing to them that He knows their **secret motives and secret plot**
 - Imagine what they are feeling at the moment (**they know Jesus is talking about them**; **verse 45b**)
- Jesus announces that they will be judged and rejected as leaders (**verse 43-44**)
- Then he answers their original question with great clarity (**see verse 42**)
 - **Psalms 118:22-27**, NASB
 - Brings together their rejection, His entry, light, current festival sacrifice (God's Lamb)
 - The Gospel of faith (**Romans 9:30-33**, NIV)

The religious leaders missed it because they were unwilling to submit to Jesus' authority

Because they thought in doing so, they would lose something

- But **Romans 9:33**, NIV (**The one who believes in Him will never be put to shame**) (i.e. ultimate gain)

This text is about the **authority of Jesus** and some people's refusal to submit to it

- We must remember, many have been deeply wounded and abused by authority figures
- Mistreated and taken advantage by someone they trusted and submitted to
 - (Parent, spouse, sibling, teacher, boss, church leader)
 - These wounds are real and deep—and they greatly color the way we perceive the word "**authority**" (some of us have suffered greatly at the hands of "**authority**") (none perfect)
- **We have to come to Jesus and let Him heal us**
 - He is not like the authority figures of this world (**He was wounded for us—suffered for us**)
 - **Therefore, since He suffered for our good, we can trust that His authority is for our good**
 - Give Jesus a chance and submit to him where you are unwilling (**Romans 9:33c**)
 - **See if He does not work good in you and for you through His authority**

Because they were choosing to reject Jesus' authority, they were forced to function in dishonesty

- What lies are you choosing to believe because you are rejecting His loving authority in some area?
 - Relationships, unforgiveness, substances, sexuality
- "**Even after you saw this (i.e. The Cross), you did not repent and believe**" (willful refusal; not faith)

Choosing to live under Jesus' ultimate authority actually frees us from the tyranny of other authorities

- We have a bigger and better king who will **work all things for our good**
- So, even in bad spaces we can trust (Cf. Jesus and Pilate in **John 19:10-11**)
- That is what it means for us to say "**Jesus is Lord**" (**to trust His sovereign goodness**)
- Even the authority that **sin, death** and the **devil** seem to have ARE NOT FINAL
- **Romans 1:4**