A Question of Authority

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 March 2024

Preacher: Dr. Michael Staton

[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang. Thank you for joining us.!

That Easter is early this year. It is in the month of March at the end. It is now March, and so this is Easter month. So, I need you to have that on your radar and not let that slip up on you. There are a couple of things we do every year as a church as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ that I want to make sure you are aware of.
We have our annual Good Friday service. As always, that's at 7 o'clock in here. It's a full hour of worship. We sing, we'll preach, we'll take the Lord's Supper together.
And so, I want to encourage you, if you at all can, please plan to be here on Good Friday for our worship service. And then on Resurrection Sunday, we'll do what we always do with our sunrise service.
That is outside at 645 at the south entrance. It's where we've done the last number of years. Also, we had our Christmas around the tree service, if you were there for that.
[1:35] And so, we would love to have you come for our sunrise service. That service is a completely different service than what we do in here at 9 and 1030. Different music, different scripture reading, different message.

It's outside in the spring, so we'll dress accordingly and just kind of watch the weather. If it rains, we'll move inside to the youth center. But the Lord's been very kind to us the last several years. We've had great weather for our sunrise service and have had 300 or more that have gathered out there with us. So, just be aware of that. And then Easter Sunday, we'll have regular 9 and 1030 service in Sunday school.
So, get that on your family's calendar. And if you can, make a priority for that Good Friday service for Sunday morning. If you're able to make it to the sunrise service, we'd love to have you with us that day.
It just makes a full weekend of worship and remembrance. And I pray will be a significant time for you. Let me also put on your radar for our men, our Men's Institute.
[2:39] We've got information as of today out at the Ministry Connection. There's a place there where you can get the commitment form. There's a place there with some frequently asked questions.

You can sign up for our information meeting, which will be next month. We've got about 105 graduates. We've got 84 or 85 current students.
The Lord continues to raise up men of all ages to be a part of that. And so, let me put that on your radar, gentlemen, to consider over the course of this next month or so, being a part of our Men's Institute.
Let me invite you here in Mark chapter 11. We're going to be studying today verses 27 to 33 around this theme of a question of authority.
A question of authority. Our world doesn't do very well with authority today. People seem to be very comfortable screaming and demeaning other people.
[3:46] A very serious issue of a lack of respect that exists in our culture today. Where people seem to just by default distrust people or any kind of leadership or position of authority.

We see that people tend to not trust anyone who's making decisions. We see that people feel very comfortable speaking words of disrespect and treating those who deserve their respect without any. Not a week goes by that you don't read of some example of a student who was assaulting a teacher over a police officer over a police officer who has been brutally attacked or worse.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

The issue of authority is a very big deal in our culture today. It's not really anything new though. Though the way that people may express their sin may have some nuance and uniqueness to it. The root issue of sin, of course, goes back all the way to the beginning. In Jesus' day, they also had an issue with authority.
[5:05] Jesus, of course, had unique authority in all that he did. And it really bothered the religious leaders. Mark 1, as we looked at now many, many months ago, we see that Jesus taught with a unique authority.

In Luke 9, he gave his apostles unique authority. He called his followers who go in his name and in his authority.
In fact, in what we know as the Great Commission, it says, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. So Christ is the one with unique authority, serving with authority, teaching with authority, commissioning with authority, and also having his authority rejected.
He claimed to have final and perfect authority in John chapter 10. And this confrontation we read about here in the life of Christ is all about authority.
In fact, as we go through this brief passage, you will see the word authority in verse 28. A second time in verse 28. Verse 29.
[6:35] Verse 33. This is all about authority. Let's look at it together. Verse 27. 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.

And they said to him, By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority to do them? And 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. And they discussed it with one another, saying, If we say from heaven, he will say, Why then did you not believe him?
But shall we say from man? They were afraid of the people, for they all held that John really was a prophet.
[7:44] So they answered Jesus, We do not know. And Jesus said to them, And neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

Remember the setting. This is Tuesday. Jesus has triumphantly come into Jerusalem on Sunday, looked around the temple, went back to Bethany, came back the next day, cleansed the temple, cursed the fig tree, went back home, and now we're coming back to Jerusalem, to the temple area. At this point, we now have less than 48 hours before Christ will be crucified on the cross. We are right near the end, leading up to his crucifixion.
And this encounter tells us a lot of things that's going on here on these final hours of his life before his crucifixion, all about the question of authority.
Notice first in verses 27, verse 28, the authority of Jesus is reviled.
[9:17] The authority of Jesus is reviled. This is a great frustration to his opponents. 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.

Everything that's happening on this day, Tuesday is a very long day in his life leading up to the crucifixion. We've got a couple of chapters in the Gospel of Mark that walk us through this very lengthy day.
And it's a day really of attack. It's a day of people, his opponents coming after him. They're going to question his authority.
In the text we look at today, in a text in chapter 12, they're going to question his teaching. And they come to him several times here in these last couple of days, and particularly here on this one day, and it's just question after question.
But the questions aren't about seeking truth. The questions are about setting traps. These aren't questions from people who are longing to know the truth.
[10:39] These are questions from unbelievers who have rejected Christ, who have made up their mind that they just want to trap, catch, and destroy the Lord.

It says he was walking in the temple. He's teaching. According to the other Gospel writers, we know that's what he's doing.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

He's probably at this point in an area of the temple known as the Court of the Gentiles. For example, Luke chapter 20, verse 1, says as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple, he was preaching the Gospel.
The temple area included a complex of buildings and various courtyards all around. There were thousands of people, as we've looked at the last several weeks, as many as 250,000 people at any one moment in time would have been gathered here in this area.
Luke 19 adds, he was teaching daily in the temple and the chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him, but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words.
[12:00] Jesus is teaching with an authority people have never witnessed before. And regardless of what people thought about him or believed about his teaching, one thing was certain, they've never heard this before.

And his opponents recognize that, and they hate that, they revile that, they are filled with anger and frustration that this one man could, yesterday, shut down all the temple operation, drive people out, and now has come back and thousands of people, according to the Gospel of Luke, hang on his every word.
Verse 27 says, this encounter is with the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Let me just help you for a moment to understand who we're talking about.
The chief priest would include the high priest, that's Caiaphas, the former high priest, that's Annas. He's the one at the top of the pyramid scheme in all of the money changing and the selling of animals that we looked at a few weeks ago.
These are the priestly families, Sadducees, theologically liberal families. And he says the scribes were also there.
[13:26] Scribes were the ones who would interpret and teach the Mosaic law. Scribes were largely Pharisees. And then he mentions the elders were there.

These are the leading lay people of the time, mature men who provided leadership. And these three groups made up what is known as the Sanhedrin.
Sanhedrin was this group of 70 men, the ruling council for the Jewish people, the supreme court of their day. Now, if you've got a little bit of background with the New Testament and with first century history, you might be asking yourself, wait a minute, weren't these people at odds with each other? Didn't Pharisees and Sadducees have their own issues between themselves, and yet here are the chief priests and the scribes, Sadducees and Pharisees and the elders, and they all are coming together in this unified front.
Isn't that strange? Well, it would be strange except that a common opponent has united them. And so, these factions that typically would not agree have in common a desire to trap, catch, and destroy Jesus.
[15:02] Verse 28 says, they said to him, by what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority to do them?

That's the question, right? It's all about authority. Who gave you this authority? And what right do you have to do these things?
Well, what things? Well, the things he did yesterday when he came to the temple and he drove out the money changers and he turned over the tables of those who were robbing the people for sacrifice and he spoke and conducted himself with such authority, it says, as we've already studied, that nobody could move around.
They were just frozen by his authority. And now he comes back and has the audacity to teach and people are gathering around and people are hanging on his every word as he teaches them and confronts the reality of sin and now the religious leaders say, who gave you authority to do these things?
You're not invited here. the real question is, what they're really asking is who gave you the authority to oppose us?
[16:36] That's their question. You're calling us into question. You're taking money out of our pockets. You're saying that we are not being faithful leaders.

Who gave you the authority to question us? Who gave you the authority to claim to be the son of man? Who gave you the authority to claim to forgive sin?

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Who gave you the authority to say that you would die and return in glory? What are your credentials? Jesus was not trained or schooled by them and so they attack his authority.
Just to help you understand what's really going on here, what's really in their heart as they question him, it's this. His authority was not given to him by them and so they don't support him at all.
Now there's a little bit even more under the surface here. You'll remember when Jesus is casting out demons earlier in his ministry and these religious leaders can't argue with the fact that he's doing the supernatural that they see it, they witness it.
[18:04] And in Mark's gospel, it was back in chapter three, so it's been a while ago for us, but remember when he's casting out demons, you read about this also in the gospel of Matthew, and these religious leaders say of Jesus, the authority you have to cast out demons was given to you by who?

The devil, Beelzebul, the prince of the demons. The religious leaders have already concluded as far as they're concerned, if we have to give an explanation for who gave Jesus authority, it came from hell.
That's what they've already said. And now you come into the temple and correct us and drive us out and shut down our operation and say that you are the one with all authority.
Who do you think you are? Who gave you this authority? Who gave you the right to question us? And so they revile, despise his authority.
Verses 29 to 30, let's notice the second thing. And that is the awareness of ungodly motives is revealed. The awareness of ungodly motives is revealed.
[19:37] You'll see it as we read it. Verse 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.

Here's the one question. Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? And with this one question, Jesus turns the tables on them again.
Yesterday, in the temple, he turned the tables literally. Today, he'll do so metaphorically.
He says, tell me, you want to talk about authority? You want to talk about truth? Here's my question. Answer this question, and then I'll talk to you about your questions. Was the baptism of John from heaven or was it from man?
Now, what's Jesus getting at with this question here? John the Baptist baptized, the Bible says, is a show of repentance.
[20:47] The phrase, the baptism of John refers to the totality of John the Baptist ministry, the totality of his preaching. Let me just remind you what we've already studied.

Mark chapter 1 verse 4, John appeared baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
This is what John the Baptist was all about. He baptized and the baptism was about repentance.
You'll remember that John the Baptist whole ministry is all about preparing the way for the arrival of Messiah.
That's why John was there. John the Baptist called by the Lord his work, his mission was to prepare the way for the Messiah.
He came preaching, baptizing, calling people to repent. He wasn't the main show.
[21:51] His role was to help point people to Christ. John the Baptist famously in John 3 says of himself, I must decrease, Christ must increase.

That was his role, that was his purpose. So the question here is John the Baptist, his life and his ministry was all about pointing to Christ.
All about saying that Jesus is the focus of all things. So here's the question Jesus asked the leaders. Was the ministry of John the Baptist from heaven?
Was it true or was it from man? Was it invented and made up? In other words, he asked these leaders, was John doing what God called him to do or was he doing his own thing?
Now this is not a hard question. This is not a riddle with a muddled answer. This is only a problem if you refuse to acknowledge the authority of Jesus.
[23:23] What they should have done is truth seekers proclaim the truth spoken the truth and believed the truth. Instead they were blinded by their hatred for Jesus because he had an authority that they had not given him.

And so Jesus says here's my question. Let's talk about John the Baptist. Was he doing heaven's work work? Or was what he was doing his own thing?

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

And then Jesus says at the end of verse 30 answer me. Just tell me the truth. What do you believe about John the Baptist?
Now these are the leaders. These are the teachers. These are the interpreters for the people. This is the ruling Jewish council.
These are the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. They should not mind responding and answering the question.
[24:40] But this leads us to a third thing that we see in verses 31 to 33. And this is where it really comes to a head. Notice thirdly that the argument of the accusers is restrained.

The argument of the accusers is restrained. What's it restrained by? Let's look at verse 31.
And they discussed it with one another. In other words, they called a time out. And they said, let us huddle together. together. So they huddle up in a circle and they said, if we say that John the Baptist was from heaven, then Jesus will say, why then did you not believe him?
In other words, if they say, they're just kind of going through their options here. This isn't about truth, this is about strategy. This isn't about truth, it's about the trap.
Trying to trap Jesus and they're trying to avoid being trapped by their own trap. If they say John was a true prophet sent by God, then Jesus will say, if you believe John was sent from God, why don't you believe his message?
[26:15] And John the Baptist, three and a half years ago, publicly points to Jesus and says, behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

So why wouldn't they just say, if John is a true prophet of God, then let's believe his message. And his message was that Christ is Messiah, therefore, Christ has all authority, so why don't the chief priests, the scribes, and the Pharisees just acknowledge the authority of Christ, believe him, and worship him.
So, they're just sorting through this together in their circle. Now, you also need to remember that earlier in John's ministry, he's of course been killed by this time, but earlier in his ministry, Pharisees and Sadducees were coming to him to be baptized, baptized, and John the Baptist famously greeted the Pharisees and the Sadducees when they came for baptism by saying, who warned you brood of vipers to flee the wrath to come?
It didn't seem to really win friends, influence people when he said that. Why did he say that? Because their hearts were well known. They weren't coming for repentance.
They were just coming to have one more bullet point on their spiritual resume. They were just trying to get one more notch in their religious belt.
[27:49] Just covering one more base so it could look like they've done everything they can do so they could glory in their own works. So, Jesus asked this very simple question.

What do you believe about John the Baptist? Was he from heaven? Or is he of man? Is he truth? Or is he fabrication? Is he from God? Or is he just speaking for himself?
But they know if they say John the Baptist is from heaven, that the obvious conclusion of that answer would be, then if his message is from heaven, then you have to believe his message, and his message was, Christ is Messiah, and they're not going to go there.
So, verse 32, they think about the other option. If we say he's from man, they were afraid of the people, for they all held that John really was a prophet.
prophet. So, here's the problem. If we say John was from heaven, then we have to agree that Christ is Messiah.
[29:05] We're not going to do that. We hate him. We want to kill him. Okay, so let's just say John the Baptist was from man. He just made up his own stuff, and he's not really from heaven. Here's the problem there.

The people believed John the Baptist was a prophet. prophet. And if these leaders deny that John the Baptist was a prophet, now they're afraid the people will turn against them.
Now, what did you do with a false prophet? Did you tolerate it? Did you say, no big deal?
did you say, well, we're just not going to encourage you to listen to him and go to his conferences? No. What did you do with a false prophet? Say it. You stoned him.
You took him out. Well, if you stone a false prophet, what would you do with somebody who called a true prophet prophet?
[30:17] A false prophet? They're afraid the stone's going to fall on them. In fact, that's exactly what Luke 20 tells us.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Verse 6, in Luke's account, if we say from man, the people will stone us, for they were convinced that John was a prophet. Jesus asked a simple question.
He said, you want to talk about authority? Let me ask you one question. Was John the Baptist from heaven or from man? This is a simple question. Is he a true prophet or is he a liar? The chief priest, the scribes, and the Pharisees, the elders don't answer.
They say, let us huddle about it. They huddle about it. And somebody says, gentlemen, we got a problem. We got two options. Option one, we say he's from heaven. If we say he's from heaven, then we're saying his message was from heaven and his message was that Christ the Messiah. We're not doing that. Option two, we say he's just from man. He's not a real prophet. But if we do that, the people believe you as a prophet. And if you stone a false prophet, what would you do to someone who called a true prophet a false prophet?
[31:31] They may stone us. What are we going to do? This is why their argument is restrained. because they're stuck.

This is all about playing politics. This is all about trying to save their own position. So, they gather up in their circle, they have their conference, they talk through their options.
verse 33, so they answered Jesus, we do not know.
To put this in our common vernacular, no comment. That's their answer. We've talked about it, we had our meeting, had our deliberation, no comment.
Now, this is even more embarrassing than it probably seems to you, because you have to remember that in the first century, this is an honor-shame culture.
[32:46] Much more so, much more ingrained in the fabric of their life, was this idea to always pursue honor, and to always avoid shame, no matter what.

It's part of what made the parable of the prodigal son so jarring, is you would never have a grown man run. It was considered shameful.
And in the parable of the prodigal son, the father would have to take his tunic, pull it up, showing the bottom of his legs, which he would never do, that would be shameful, and then run, which he would never do.
That's why that parable is so shocking when Jesus told it. Who, in their right mind, would do something shameful at the cost of his honor? Well, here are the chief priests, scribes, and the elders, people who are supposed to have answers, people who are supposed to know.
And their hatred for Christ and rejection of his authority is so strong, they're willing to risk shame as they emerge and say, we do not know.
[34:08] The truth of the matter is, all they want to do is save their own skin. Jesus says, you don't want to talk about truth.

This is all just about your power and your quest for authority. and so Jesus responds, then neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.
In other words, Jesus says, I know your game, I see your game, and I am going silent. Jesus' rebuke to them was jarring.
His silence to them is terrifying. I'm not going to play these games. Now, what does this mean for us?
Let me give you a few implications this means for us. Number one, it means Jesus' authority is greater than the authority of anyone else.
[35:10] His authority is greater than anyone else. He's the final authority over all leaders. He's the final authority over all spiritual leaders. He's the final authority with any church.

His word is our standard. His word is our authority. And as I say often here, I don't ever want to take this for granted. I want to make sure that we understand this.
One of the implications from this text, as is true in many texts, is that the word of Christ is our authority and nothing less than that, which is why right now we have hundreds of open Bibles. Because you need to understand that I hold zero authority in and of myself. None. My only authority is if I am under authority.
My only authority as a pastor is if what I am saying is God's word. And the evidence that we believe that is that you have an open Bible and what you're saying is show me that what you're saying is from God.
[36:28] Christ has all ultimate authority. No years of experience preaching, no degrees earned in school, no title that's given, none of those things give me any authority by myself.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

None. The only authority I have or anybody else who's in front of you as a leader of this church, the only authority we have is if our lives and our words come under the authority of His word, which is our final authority in all things.
Which is why you need to make sure when you listen to men preach in person or online or however you listen to people teach and preach the Bible, if you don't need your Bible open, you don't need to hear the man.
It's as simple as that. If an open Bible is not required for you to follow along, then you're listening to somebody who has thought his mind, his words were authoritative enough, and it never is true.
Christ, His word, is our final authority. Here's a second implication for us. Jesus' authority is greater than any spiritual power of darkness.
[37:56] His authority is greater than any spiritual leader, and His authority is greater than any power of darkness. Let me read to you from Colossians 2, 13 to 15.

It says, When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us, and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross when He had disarmed the rulers and authorities.
He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him. Christ has authority over all religious leaders, and Christ has authority over all powers of darkness, which means thirdly, we must obey His Word and His authority.
We must obey His Word and His authority. so what we don't want to do is play the game that the scribes and the elders and the chief priests were playing.
They didn't want to speak the truth. They wanted to run everything to the lens of, well, what will this mean for us? What will this do with our power?
[39:38] That's a terrible way to live your life. As Christ followers, here's what we say. We say Christ has ultimate authority over all men, all leaders, all people.

He has ultimate authority even over the powers of darkness. Therefore, we subject ourselves to His authority. So we say what He said.
We don't say to ourselves, when you're teaching and preaching a passage, the pastor can't say, well, how will the people respond to this? Or will the people like this?
What a horrible way to lead people to care more about your reputation than the reputation of Christ and His Word. It's a bit like a physician who examines you and sees cancer and says, you know what, I'm trying to think here, if I tell you you have cancer, you're going to leave depressed, and I don't want you to be depressed, I want you to like me, so I'll just make something else up.
What is that? That's malpractice, right? This happens in churches all the time. I'm not going to teach this text because people won't like it, I'm not going to say this truth because somebody may disagree with me, I'm not going to say what the Word clearly says because it may cause someone to not want to be here, and what the preacher does is he makes his position more important than the truth.
[41:10] Flee from such a man. The only job the pastor has is to stand up straight and with boldness, compassion, love, and grace declare what God has said.

That's it. In the same way with our own lives as Christians for all of us, if you go through life saying if I speak the truth, believe the truth, am associated with the truth, and you say, well, how will that affect my popularity at school?
How will that affect who might ask me on a date? How will that affect my job? How will people in my family respond to it? You will always be tempted to say, I guess I should just be quiet.
That's what Jesus' opponents just did. They just came back from their huddle and said, no comment.
I'm not going on a record saying anything that may cost me. when Christians live like that, we're taking a play from the playbook of the enemies of Jesus.
[42:32] So what you and I must do is say, I'm a Christian. The Bible is my authority. Here's what the Bible says.

Think of me what you will. Do with me what you must. But I'm a Christ follower.
I live under the authority of His Word. His Word has spoken. And here I take my stand. That's how we must live.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Anything less? is to care more for yourself than you do the truth. Which is what the enemies of Jesus did.
We obey His Word and we obey His authority. authority. As the choir led us and as Jeff read for us, let me close by bringing your mind back again to Jude 24 and 25.
[43:41] Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy, to the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time, now, and forever.

If there's not been a time in your life where you have submitted yourself to the authority of Christ, I invite you even this day to do so.
To acknowledge your sin, to trust in the work of Christ, to yield yourself to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, asking Him to forgive you, clinging to His mercy, and His grace, understanding that it is unto Him all authority rests, and He is your only hope.
But here's the good news, the one with all the authority offers to you forgiveness of sins. What more could you need?
Your life is a question of authority, worthy, and I pray you would yield yourself to the only one worthy of all praise and all worship.
[45:08] not me. You are one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one one fathers one one one one one one one fathers fathers one one one fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers ou women fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers Thank you.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host