



April 7, 2020
Supreme Authority

Prayer:

Dear Jesus, guide us by Your Word to recognize Your supreme authority and Your power over all things. Lead us to trust in you completely for forgiveness from our sins. Amen.

Read: Mark 11:27-33

Devotion:

Yesterday we heard about how, on the Monday of Holy Week, Jesus went into the temple in Jerusalem and cleared out all of the merchants and moneylenders who had set up shop there. He wanted to make it clear through His actions and His teachings that God's temple was a place for people to come to God in prayer, not a place for businessmen to make a quick buck off of all the pilgrims who had journeyed to Jerusalem for the Passover.

The overwhelming response of the people to Jesus clearing out the temple was positive. We heard yesterday that "the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching" (Mark 11:18). But that positive reaction, together with the royal welcome Jesus had received from the crowds on Palm Sunday, was not sitting well with the religious rulers of Jerusalem. They were intimidated by the awe and adoration that the people had for Jesus. They saw Him as a threat to their own authority and power and they had started earnestly searching for a way to get rid of Him. In fact, they had even begun looking for a way to kill Him (Mark 11:18).

On Tuesday, they came to Jesus with a series of tests, questions with which they hoped to trap Him into saying something they could hold against Him in court. In our lesson today, they asked Jesus by whose authority He had cleared out the temple and was teaching to the people. They were hoping to either be able to charge Him with blasphemy (claiming to be God) and kill Him if He said His authority came from God or discredit Him as a crazy guy or a fool if He said the authority simply came from Himself.

Jesus turned the tables on them. Rather than allowing them to trap Him, He trapped them. He asked them where John the Baptist's authority had come from. If they said John had claimed the authority for himself, they would be denying what all of the people held to be true, that John was a prophet of God. If they said he truly was a prophet, they would have to repent of the fact that they had rejected him and his teachings (including his statement that Jesus was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world).

The difference between Jesus' questioning and that of the chief priests and the elders was in their motivation. They were trying to trap Him out of hatred so that they could kill and rid themselves of a problem. He was trying to trap them out of love, giving them an eleventh-hour invitation to repent of their rejection of Him and acknowledge Him as the Messiah.

We often find ourselves questioning God as well. Each time, He comes to us in His Word to show us His authority and call us back to repentance and forgiveness.

Additional Reading: Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 8; Ephesians 1:17-23

Family Questions:

1. Are there times when we, like the Jewish leaders, challenge God's power or the authority of His Word? Why do we do it? What is our motivation? Can you work through those instances as a family and ask for God's forgiveness?
2. How many Bible stories can you think of that prove that Jesus was indeed God or that His power and authority were divine?
3. How is Easter the greatest revelation of Jesus' divinity?
4. What can you do when you are challenged to accept something about God that you don't like or that goes against your current way of living?

Going Deeper:

1. Read Matthew 22:15-46. What four additional "tests" does Matthew list that the Pharisees and Sadducees tried to trap Jesus with on the Tuesday of Holy Week?
2. How have we tried to test God in the same ways?

Hymn: I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus

1 I am trusting you, Lord Jesus, Trusting only you,
Trusting you for full salvation, Free and true.

4 I am trusting you to guide me; You alone shall lead,
Ev'ry day and hour supplying All my need.

6 I am trusting you, Lord Jesus; Never let me fall.
I am trusting you forever And for all.

Prayer:

Lord, when we have doubts about Your power or authority, quiet them with Your Word. Set Your Spirit to work in our hearts that, not doubting, but firmly believing that You are Lord of all, we may rest in the peace of sins forgiven and heaven secured. Amen.