

Sermon Title: Who Do You Think You Are?
Scripture Text: Mark 11:27-33

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 7-21-19

Let me ask you a question: How do you think you would react, if you could be in the presence of Jesus Christ when He was here that first time? What if He entered your Bible study, and He rebuked a lot of what goes on there? What if He challenged you, personally, about something that was very important to you, and about your priorities? What if He came into our church on a Sunday morning, and eliminated a number of things? How would you react? That's a trick question—there's no way in the world you know how you would react. It's hypothetical, and I know you really can't answer. But the text before us this morning is the record of a time when Jesus dealt with the leadership of the spiritual life of Israel—right out in public, and the day after He had caused an incredible amount of turmoil in their world. Jerusalem was abuzz with reactions to Jesus at this, His final Passover. The temple area was still reeling from what had happened the day before, when Jesus drove out the money changers and the sellers of sacrificial animals. Well, the Jewish leaders—the ones who *should have been* leading people to follow Jesus—they didn't react so well.

Let me set the stage for you. And if it seems to you like, week after week I keep hammering on the sequence of events and the timing of things in the life of Jesus, it's because—I *am* hammering on the sequence of events and the timing of things in the life of Jesus; and the reason that I'm doing that is because: you can't fully understand these things, and what Jesus said on these occasions, unless you know how they fit into the larger scheme of things. We're in the last week of Jesus's life; everything from Mark 11, Verse 1 through the end of Chapter 16—the last six chapters—is all devoted to that final week of His life on Earth during His first coming.

He arrived at Bethany, a village two miles away from Jerusalem; there, He stayed overnight with His friends, Mary and Martha and Lazarus—the one whom He had raised from the dead a couple of weeks earlier. Lazarus was attracting crowds, which added to the interest that people had in the arrival of Jesus (Jn. 12:9). And because of what Lazarus meant to the message of Jesus, when *he* was going around talking about having been dead, and now he's alive—the leaders of the Jews were *also* seeking an opportunity to kill Lazarus (Jn. 12:10-11). They already had a well-established plan to kill Jesus.

The next day after He arrived in Bethany—either Sunday or Monday, depending on how you like to count it—Jesus made the walk from Bethany to Jerusalem, and it became an amazing spectacle. We call it the "Triumphal Entry." There was a crowd already gathered in Bethany, and they made the walk with Him. And then, at the same time, there was a huge crowd of pilgrims already in Jerusalem, anticipating the Passover; they streamed out *from* Jerusalem toward Bethany, the two crowds became one, and they escorted Jesus into the city. That massive combined crowd laid palm branches before Him. Jesus rode a donkey in specific fulfillment of the prophecy in Zechariah Chapter 9, Verse 9, about how the Messiah would arise in Jerusalem.

The crowd shouted over and over again: "Hosanna to the Son of David"—a specific reference to Messiah—"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!" (Matt. 21:9, NASB, and throughout, unless otherwise noted). "Hosanna" is like, "God, save us!" (see Ps. 118:25)—so, they're calling Him Messiah; they're recognizing Him as the Savior.

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It was unprecedented excitement in Jerusalem. But the open acknowledge of Jesus as the Messiah—that was more than the leaders of the Jews could handle. They were *livid* with resentment (cf. Matt. 27:18).

And when things settled down that night, Jesus and His men left the city; they returned to Bethany, where they spent the night. The next morning, as they returned to Jerusalem—that was when Jesus cursed that fig tree, and then He went on into the city. He cleared the temple of the ones who were defiling the Outer Court by turning it into a place of business for personal financial gain; they were taking advantage of the pilgrims who were there for the Passover. Jesus said they had turned the place into a "robbers' den" (Mk. 11:17). After He cleared the place out, He stayed the rest of the day. He primarily spent time with some Greek-speaking visitors; we learn that from John (12:20-22)—it's not in Matthew, Mark, or Luke. And then again that night, Jesus returned to Bethany and stayed there with His friends.

The next day, on their way into Jerusalem, Jesus stopped at the dead fig tree, and He taught His disciples a lesson on faith and prayer. That was our focus last time. He used the dead fig tree as His object lesson. The tree symbolized Israel; cursing the fig tree was symbolic of the curse on the nation of Israel because of the spiritual condition of her leaders, which had infected most of the people, as well. So, while the *tree* is a symbol of Israel, Jesus used the miraculous *death* of the tree as an illustration of the power of God. It *was* a demonstration of the power of God, because when He said those words to the tree, it *instantly* was dried out from root to the tip of every single leaf; it was the only destructive miracle that He ever did. And He drew from *that* the application that, when you pray, you need to start with faith in God—the *true* God, defined the way the Scriptures show that He has revealed Himself. And He told His men that, that was how they could invoke the power of God, which is the reason that prayers of His children—who are coming in faith, and asking according to His will—are answered; sometimes, with really dramatic results.

That brings us to the setting for today. Jesus is in Jerusalem; He's in the temple. And He responds to people all the time, as He teaches. According to Luke, He was preaching the gospel. You say, "How can that be?—because the gospel is defined in First Corinthians 15, 'that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures' (vss. 3-4)—so, the gospel wasn't complete yet!" Well, the gospel was still the gospel. "Gospel" means "good news"—He was preaching to them the good news that, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17) because the King is here! Give Him a couple more days—He *will* finish out the other details of the good news, to make it the gospel that we preach today (cf. Gal. 3:8).

The leaders of the Jews were, as I say, livid; and this day, they confront Jesus, and they challenge His authority. When you understand the setting of this, it's pretty easy to understand what the passage means. The leaders of the Jews are going to demand that Jesus tell them the source of His authority. And as we read this, you're going to find that the situation challenges *you* about how *you* respond to God's authority.

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In essence, what they said to Him is, "Who do You think You are, coming in here and doing these things?" So we're going to look at Verses 27 through 33; pretty easy to outline. We'll see the Challenge; and then, the Counter-challenge; and then, the Conundrum which that created for the leaders of the Jews; and finally, the Condemnation.

Let's jump into the Challenge: Mark 11, Verse 27—"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 began saying to Him, 'By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things?' " What things? "Things like: wrecking our fig tree, and turning over the tables in *our* temple—how dare You do that? Who do You think You are?"

It was "the chief priests and the scribes and the elders"—that was almost certainly an official delegation, sent by the governing group of the Jews, known as the Sanhedrin. It may actually have included the high priest, Caiaphas, or Annas—father and son—or, at least "the captain of the temple" (Acts 4:1; 5:24); because, to them, there was nothing more important than getting rid of Jesus. He'd had *countless* encounters with Pharisees especially, but Pharisees *and* Sadducees, through the last three years; but *now*, its showdown time. And since Jesus threatened the authority of the entire religious establishment, this coalition against Him brought together all the factions of Jewish leadership; factions which, normally, couldn't even get along with each other.

But there were Pharisees in this group. The Pharisees were the most legalistic ones—they were the religious ultraconservatives, teaching a works-righteousness system of salvation (see Rom. 10:3). They controlled most of the attitudes of most of the people, because they controlled most of the training of most of the rabbis who served in most of the synagogues. They hated Jesus because He expose the hypocrisy of their religious merit-badge systems of Do's-and-Don'ts. They just couldn't stand Him.

Then, there were the Sadducees—theologically, the other end of the spectrum from the Pharisees (Acts 23:8). This was the more aristocratic group. They were the ones who controlled the priesthood. They dominated the Sanhedrin, though they had to work with the Pharisees—which really irked them. *They* hated Jesus because He exposed *their* hypocrisy—a different kind of hypocrisy from the Pharisees, but hypocrisy nevertheless. Theirs was a system of elitism. They had a lack of faith in the Scriptures; they rejected all but the first five books, and then they twisted them (Matt. 22:29). They were the ones behind the robbers'-den-style profiteering that was going on in the temple.

Then, there were the Zealots. Those are the ones who wanted a political and military Messiah to lead a revolt against Rome. They were at the zenith of their hopeful expectations on the day of the Triumphal Entry, because they were thinking, "Finally, we've got our man! Everybody's behind Him! We can get out from under the yoke of Rome!" (see Jn. 6:15) But during this week, they're going to lose heart because Jesus just kept right on preaching—not about overthrowing the government, but about the salvation of souls, the needs of the heart to repent. They're going to turn on Him in the next couple of days.

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There's another group called the Herodians; we heard them mentioned earlier in Mark. Remember, they're the ones who were in league with the Romans; and they were uneasy about nearly everything that Jesus did and said, because they didn't want to upset this delicate balance between Israel's quasi-autonomy and the dictatorship of Rome.

But all those groups were united by their common hatred for Jesus. The *one thing* they ever all agreed upon was: "Jesus must be killed!" That's a really cool thing for the spiritual leaders to be saying, right? "Let's murder this innocent man! Why, He's guilty of *healing thousands!* Let's kill Him!" (see Jn. 11:47-53) They understood He was claiming to be God, and they regarded that as blasphemy (Jn. 5:18; 10:33). They *weren't about* to examine the evidence (Jn. 10:25, 37-38; cf. Acts 2:22).

So they came to Him, it says, "as He was walking in the temple." Matthew says: "while He was teaching" (Matt. 21:23). Rabbis often taught their disciples as they walked along—a meandering kind of teaching ministry. Luke says: "He was teaching the people...and preaching the gospel"—the gospel aimed at Jews and inviting them to embrace the Messiah and His kingdom. From the very beginning, John the Baptist reached: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2); then, Jesus preached: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (4:17)—they kept offering that, right to the very end.

The Outer Court of the temple—that gigantic area—is what Jesus had cleared of the money changers and the sellers of the animals. I highly suspect that, all the money changers and all the rip-off artists selling sacrificial animals were still in business. They were probably just lining the streets right *outside* the temple; they didn't go away. Jesus didn't "cleanse" the temple in returning it to what it was supposed to be; He was just symbolically showing God's view of the temple. And it was *all* going to be destroyed—"Not one stone will be left upon another" (Mk. 13:2); and that prophecy was fulfilled in A.D. 70. We'll get to that a little bit later in Mark.

So on this day, Jesus has a little more room to walk around. That Outer Court is now full of people who had come to worship at the time of the Passover, and Jesus carried on a number of conversations—probably many more than are recorded in the Bible. Exactly what He was teaching isn't revealed to us; but from what we've learned, you *know* it had to do with the kingdom of heaven; and you *know* He was preaching good news, because Luke says that's what He was doing. So, certainly, He was calling people to repent and to believe in Him.

Something we *do* know is: He was the most popular show in town. In Luke 19:48, we read this about that day: "All the people were hanging on to every word He said." He was captivating! And that infuriated the Jewish leaders *all the more*, hence their demand. They come up to Him, right in front of everybody, and say: "By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things?" I really believe they *knew* what Jesus would have said to that question. Why? Because they had *heard* it; they'd had *countless* encounters with Him! It's not that they didn't have the facts, it's that they refused to accept the answer to the question that they were asking. What they were saying, in essence, is: "Who do You think You are, coming in here and acting like that?" Understand: *they are* the ones who *claimed* to speak for God (Matt. 23:2), and they're standing there *arguing* with God! Not a good place to be.

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All that Jesus did, He did with authority—with the authority of God; He did His Father's bidding (Jn. 12:49). And He *is* God! But to get the full meaning of all this, you need to understand the mindset of the ones who confronted Him. They had their system for training and recognizing rabbis, teachers, and priests. They had a very rigorous system for bringing up those people. *They* were the ones, in their own minds, who could confer authority on someone; and only those who perpetuated the party line were ever granted the authority to teach (Jn. 7:47-48). Jesus was not a member of that club! All the leaders of the Jews—especially those in the Sanhedrin—were reeling from what Jesus did the previous day in the temple; they regarded it as *their* temple, and *they* were in charge. So in their minds: them being the ultimate authority on religious matters, somebody symbolically rejecting them—and showing that *God* is rejecting them—they believed that Jesus was guilty of blasphemy.

Now, the key word here is "authority." The word that's translated "authority," if you'll notice in English—if you want to slice off a couple of letters—it has the root "author." The "author" of something is the initiator of it (e.g. Heb. 2:10; 12:2). The Greek word here that is translated "authority" actually has a form of the verb "to be"—a participle, so it would be like "being"—and it has a prefix that means "out of" or "out from"; so the idea is that, "authority" comes "out from" the "being," "out from who this one is." And they're saying to Jesus, "*We* didn't tell *You* that *You* could do that—therefore, *You* can't do that! *You* can't possibly have the authority to do that!" So, since *they* believed *they* possessed the ultimate spiritual authority, Jesus is a blasphemer.

Now, in all of His encounters with any of these leaders, over three-plus years, *never* did any of those Jewish leaders investigate, or even entertain the idea, that they might be wrong or they might need more information. The only exception to that, that I can think of offhand, is Nicodemus, who *was* one of the teachers of the Jews (Jn. 3:10), who came to Jesus and secretly asked Him a question. And we have evidence that *he* came around, by the time of the death and resurrection of Christ (Jn. 19:39); but as a group, they just cared about maintaining their positions, maintaining their control over the people, maintaining their profitable selling of franchises to rip people off during the Passover. They were pompous, they were proud, they were hypocritical—and they were powerless to stop Jesus.

What amazed them—and really, *all* the people who heard Jesus—was that, Jesus had that hard-to-identify thing called "authority." It's not that He flashed a badge, it's not that He had a diploma to show them—He just had authority; and they were jealous of His authority, and they were angry that He opposed them. Remember what was said of Jesus at the end of the Sermon on the Mount? Matthew 7:28 and 29—"When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes." The contrast was vivid. When the scribes, when the other rabbis, taught, they always quoted each other; they always put on that air of scholarliness, as in: "Did God really say..." That was the attitude! When they *did* discuss a text of Scripture, they didn't examine carefully what it actually said; they would quote Rabbi So-and-so who said such-and-such about it, and propose some theory (Titus 1:14). Theirs was a spiritual "good ol' boys" club, and because they were so committed to maintaining their traditions, so committed to hanging on to their position, nothing ever changed in their club, except the faces. They would

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train the new ones coming in; the old ones would pass along. That's how they drifted so far away from obedience to the Scriptures—because they had overlaid their manmade traditions on top of what God said, and the Word of God was squeezed out. Think back to Mark Chapter 7—"Paying attention to the traditions of men, you overrule the Word of God" (see vss. 6-13).

So along came Jesus. Even though He didn't possess any authority that *they* conferred upon Him, He showed this *amazing* power, this amazing authority. Rather than *listening* to what He said, rather than asking honest questions, rather than examining themselves, they refused to ever entertain the idea that they might just be wrong. So, all that's left is: attack this outsider who has this authority. Notice, they didn't deny He had authority—they just said, "It's not from us, therefore it's bogus!" They completely failed to see that Jesus was the One who was speaking the truth; so they made *themselves* the ones who were outside the kingdom of God, looking in (Lk. 13:28).

Look how masterfully Jesus responded to the challenge: He gave them the Counter-challenge. This is brilliant! Mark 11:29 and 30—"Jesus said to them, 'I will ask you one question, and you answer Me, and then I will tell you by what authority I do these things. Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men? Answer Me.' " He wasn't being devious when He responded that way. Many of the finest teachers respond to questions with a question, in order to help guide the person along. My theology professor in seminary—I tried to style my classroom teaching after him for years. He was *masterful* at engaging students; and when somebody asked questions, he *always* turned it into something good. He was very gentle; he was very kind. If you asked him a factual question, he'd give you that. But if you asked him a question, and he responded with a question, you knew that, in the next 60 seconds, you were going to want to crawl under your desk, because you had just exposed something that needed *fixing*; and he, very gently, would show you that, no, you don't want to go down that rabbit trail—it's a dead end—or, worse.

Well, Jesus—like many of the rabbis—used a technique like that; He was engaging these men in a discussion, and He was spectacularly wise in how He did it. The problem for the leaders of the Jews was that, they never did catch on, in every previous challenge they had made to Jesus; they always came out on the short end of the logic. Why? Because their logic was way off; they were trying to *get around* what Scripture said, rather than humble themselves *under* what Scripture said. In every previous encounter with Jesus, they came out on the short end whenever they would discuss a Scripture, because they were twisting the Scriptures; and Jesus was the Word incarnate! This time, they just didn't even mask what they were doing. They openly, publicly challenged His authority; and guess what? They came out on the short end because they were arguing with God (Prov. 21:30; cf. Ps. 94:9-10).

So, Jesus asks the question: "Tell Me, was the baptism of John"—meaning, John the Baptist—"from heaven, or from men?" "The baptism of John" is just kind of a shorthand way of saying: "everything John did," because he baptized in accordance with repentance from sin. So He was just asking them to simply declare to Him: "Do you believe that John the Baptist was a true messenger of God, or not?" It's a yes-or-no question. If it's multiple-choice, the answers are "A" or "B"—it wasn't a hard question.

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Now, Jesus *knew* they had rejected John, even before He came on the scene; but it was the perfect question in reply to the hypocritical challenge from the leaders of the Jews. They challenged His authority. Jesus gave them a Counter-challenge, and that brings up a Conundrum for these guys. How masterful that question was is clear when you see what it did to the hypocrites. Verse 31 through the middle of Verse 33—"They began reasoning among themselves, saying, 'If we say, "From heaven," He will say, "Then why did you not believe him?" But shall we say, "From men"?'—they were afraid of the people, for everyone considered John to have been a real prophet. Answering Jesus, they said, 'We do not know.' "

The question was "A" or "B," and they chose "C." They were just crushed. He sent them into this conundrum. The word "reasoning" is a translation of one of those Greek words you accidentally know a form of: our word "dialogue" comes from this word *dialogizomai*. Right there in the middle of the temple courtyard, I can just see them huddling up—arms around each other's shoulders, trying to call the next play. They talked it over. None of them asked, "Well, what's the truth?" None of them considered: "Could we have been wrong about John?" No one in the "holy huddle" there said, "You know, I think He has a point!" The only issue for them at that moment was: "How are we going to save face—and our positions—and get rid of Jesus?" They clung to power over the people. Appearance over everything. They covered up the wickedness in their hearts with their outward display of pseudo-righteousness (see Matt. 23:27-28).

If they agreed that John the Baptist was sent from God, they would have to deal with the fact that John is the one who pointed to Jesus and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn. 1:29). "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn. 3:30), "the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." (Jn. 1:27). To accept John the Baptist as a prophet from heaven would have logically required accepting Jesus as the Messiah; and *they weren't about to go there*, because *that* would mean: *they're wrong!*

But that was only *half* of their problem. If they said "B"—if they said John the Baptist was *not* "from heaven" but that he was "from men," they would *also* be in trouble, because: whatever remaining credibility they had with the people there would be lost, because "everyone considered John to have been a real prophet." So they were crushed in the jaws of this dilemma. The truth had fangs that would have ended their authority with the people, no matter what they said.

Political expediency dictated: they had to find a way out. If the only answers are "A" or "B," they desperately needed "C," or they would be exposed as the hypocrites that they were. So the third choice that they came up with was also probably not very pleasant for them to swallow, but it was the best option available to them at the moment—given that they rejected the truth as an option. So they caved in and they said: "We do not know."

Now, that's a *lie*. *They knew* that they rejected John the Baptist. *They knew* that they did not believe his message. *They knew* that they rejected what John said about Jesus. *They knew* that they rejected Jesus. *They knew* that their own answer was "B"—but they were such man-pleasers, they wanted so much to keep the attention and the focus on them and keep their

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control over the people, they weren't *about* to say the truth of what they actually believed, even though they were believing the wrong thing. It wasn't a matter of not knowing what the subject was about; it was a matter of willful unbelief. It wasn't a hard question! It's that their *hearts* were hard. And it wasn't that they couldn't figure it out; it was that they clung *desperately* to their position, and keeping up appearances. So, that was their Conundrum, and they decided they would just say, "We do not know." But they didn't mean that, either. They didn't mean that *honestly*, like: "Explain it to us."

So there's the Challenge—"Who do You think You are?" There's the Counter-challenge—"Just answer My question, and then I'll answer yours." And then comes the Conundrum—He puts them in the grips of this dilemma that they had. And then, the Condemnation—at the end of Verse 33. Jesus knew, if He gave them an explanation, it wouldn't solve anything (cf. Jn. 10:25); they would have only tried to use it against Him like they did everything else. That's why He asked the question in response to their question; and when they waffled on it, the middle of Verse 33—"And Jesus said to them, 'Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things.' "

I call that a condemnation because, like I've said, Jesus was turning His back on them. God was going to take the kingdom of God away from the Jews and give it to the ones who would bring fruit in keeping with it (Matt. 21:43). And so, they were rejecting the light that Jesus had given to them hundreds of times. So what did He do? Finally, He turned off the switch; no more light for you. All that He would say to these men, from that point on, would be a series of "woes" that He would pronounce against them later on that same day. It's in Matthew 23—we'll probably refer to it somewhere along the way here, even though Mark doesn't mention it. He would also express His sorrow over the spiritual state of things in Jerusalem.

Now, it isn't that Jesus was done; He has a lot more to say. And as a matter of fact, at that point on that day—when they've said, "We do not know," and He said, "Well, then, I'm not going to answer *your* question"—then, Jesus launched into a series of three parables. Our next visit to Mark will focus on the only one of the three that Mark records.

But today, let's make sure we don't let this passage slip by without asking what application it has for us. They challenged Jesus's authority. They decided it was up to *them* to choose what was true and what was not. So, as we look at this, we have to ask: "Do I pick and choose what I believe?" They had serious limitations on what they would accept and what they would not. Now, understand: they *claimed* to believe God's Word, but they *rejected* the One that the Bible—their Bible, the Old Testament—told them to believe in (Jn. 5:39; cf. Deut. 18:15, 18-19; Ps. 110:1-7; Is. 53:2-12; Mic. 5:2). The truth is: you don't *have* the luxury to pick and choose what you will believe (Matt. 4:4; 5:18-19). You have the *right* to—you have a right to be wrong!—but choose the wrong answers, and you wind up in the "lake of fire" forever (Rev. 20:10, 15; cf. Pr. 1:29-31; Jn. 3:18). Does preaching like John the Baptist—"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2)—does that make you uncomfortable? The mark of a Christian, as I say over and over again, is: how you feel about sin and about Jesus—you're going to hate one and love the other; you're going to run away from one and run toward the other, in every moment of every day.

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Are there some things in the Bible that you just really don't want to deal with? Remember the lesson last week on prayer, when Jesus said it drastically affects the effectiveness of your prayer if you won't practice forgiveness in the same manner that God has forgiven you? Are you carrying a grudge? Are you staying away from God's orders that, you must do all you can to be reconciled to someone who has damaged your relationship?

Is there a little corner of your thought-life that you like to take out and fondle when you think that no one he is looking, that no one will know? Is there some part of your thought-life that you are afraid to talk to the Lord about? Is there some part of God's Word that, you *know* what it says, but you've figured out a way that *you're* the exception, *you're* the one it doesn't apply to? Are you afraid to get serious about studying what the Bible says about our life in this world? The Bible says a lot to wealthy people; and if you live in America, you're in the top four percent of the wealthiest in the world. Are you afraid to maybe let some of the truth of God's Word shine on what kind of a steward you are, or what kind of a steward you are of your abilities that God has given to you—the spiritual gift that He's given to you? Are you willing to realize that, if you're not waking up in the morning with the intense desire to honor God and serve Him that day, you probably aren't His child! Because that's what His children do (see Ezek. 36:27b; Phil. 2:13; Titus 2:14; 1 Jn. 2:3-5).

You get the point. I'm saying, if the Holy Spirit is convicting you about something; if you've done something you know was wrong, even if you didn't get caught—how do you deal with it before the Lord? If you're being convicted, the only thing you can do is to do what needs to be done (1 Jn. 1:9; cf. Prov. 28:13)—like Saint Nike would say: "Just do it!" Just fix it! Bow before the Lord. And don't forget: you have the great privilege to call upon Him (see Acts 2:21; 1 Cor. 1:2). What did the previous passage say? "Have faith in God" (Mk. 11:22). And you can tell Him anything; and He *wants* you to tell Him everything (1 Pet. 5:7; cf. Ps. 62:8).

You tap into the authority of Jesus when you become His child; and do you realize that, that same authority *He* had, *we* have? Now, we can't do the miracles—I get it. We're always tainted by sin—I get it. But do you realize that, when you speak what He says in His Word, you speak with His authority? (see Matt. 16:19; 1 Thess. 2:13; 4:2, 8; 2 Tim. 4:2) So if you're going to offend somebody, make sure that they are offended by what God says, not by you being a jerk in how you say it (2 Tim. 2:24-25; cf. Prov. 3:3).

We actually have His authority! Paul left his good friend Titus in a really tough place to minister; he was in Crete, and the Bible actually says: "Cretans are always liars" (Titus 1:12). It was a tough place, and Titus was kind of his fighting man, his SWAT Team for spiritual things; and he said, "Titus, I want you to go there and put things in order, and appoint elders in in every city. And along the way"—look what he said to Titus, Titus 2:15—"These things"—What things? Well, everything that comes before it in Titus; there's some really good stuff there; and, by implication, everything that comes *after* it in Titus; and there's some good stuff there. What he says is: "These things" that are my word, "speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you." I've always thought that's an ironic turn of words. "Let no one disregard you." I can't stop people from disregarding me, but—in the context of Titus, he's saying, "In the church, don't let anyone disregard the authority of what God says!"

Sermon Title: Who Do You Think You Are?

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Mark 11:27-33

Date: 7-21-19

And so, as we go out—and we are His emissaries in the world (Phil. 2:15; 1 Pet. 3:15)—you might get disregarded, you might even get attacked, but you speak "truth in love" (Eph. 4:15); and when you do that, you are speaking with the authority of God.

"By what authority are You doing these things? Who gave You this authority?" Well, the answer is pretty obvious, as Jesus said countless times: "I do what the Father shows Me" (see Jn. 5:20; 12:49); "I do the will of my Father" (see Jn. 4:34; 8:29). And we, my friends, must do the same. Let somebody say, "Who do you think you are, to say that to me?" And you say, "Well, it's not my authority—it's what God says. If you don't like it, I get it; I've had my share of rebellion. But the point is, you've got to deal with the truth."

"Who do you think you are?" I hope you think that you're an adopted child of God, and that you bring the message of truth and salvation to a world that desperately needs it.

Let's pray:

Our Father, we do thank You for the riches of Your grace in Christ. And it makes us tremble to even think of putting ourselves in the same category with Your Son, when it comes to authority. But we know that You have revealed Yourself perfectly. You have revealed everything we need for life and godliness. So please, Father, help us to accept Your authority today. Help us to realize that, we are not the ones who are the exceptions to obeying You. And most of all, as we go out from this place, help us to be good, faithful proclaimers of Your truth, and the good news of what Christ has accomplished in order that we might become, in Him, the righteousness of God because He took our sin upon Himself. Thank You, again, Lord, for Your faithfulness to us. Use us for Your glory, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.