

Time of Grace Ministry
What if I Don't Agree With Jesus?

Mark 11:27-33

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Sometimes, if you actually read the teachings of Jesus, you'll find out that you don't always agree. In fact, I'm not sure if I should admit this as a pastor but, sometimes when I read the things that Jesus taught, I want to say, "Really?"

Two thousand years ago, when Jesus came from heaven to earth when God was walking among us, it wasn't the religious extremists that killed him. It wasn't the atheists that put him on the cross. It was not the worshippers of Zeus that found pitchforks and torches and called for his death. It was church people. It makes me wonder what in the world would cause a person like you, people like us, to kill God? You know, I was paging through the gospels, the biographies of Jesus in the Bible the other day, looking for an answer to that question. What in the world would cause religious people, Bible-reading people, to kill God? And I think I came up with the answer. If I could boil all of the arguments, all the tension, all the drama down to just one word, the word would be, "Authority."

People would disagree with Jesus but he refused to agree to disagree. He refused to say, "Well, that's your truth and this is mine." He insisted in every conversation, in every argument, of getting the last word, of having the final vote, of being the one to sit on the throne of authority and swing the gavel and say, "No, no, no. I'm right. And you're wrong." The idea of outside authority has been toppled in the past few years. From presidents and pastors and politicians and parents, authority and truth has gone from out there to in here; to me, myself and I. The authority has changed hands, so to speak. Sometimes, if you actually read the teachings of Jesus, you'll find out that you don't always agree. In fact, I'm not sure if I should admit this as a pastor, but sometimes when I read the things that Jesus taught, I want to say, "Really?" I mean, if you do more than like pick and choose the Hallmark verses out of the gospel, you will find out that Jesus taught some offensive things and you want to say, "Jesus, really?"

Maybe the worst thing though that I think Jesus said is what he taught about hell. That hell is this place where God isn't and because of that, hell is just eternal, conscious torment. That God is light and so if God's not in hell, it's just darkness. And in God's presence, there's laughing and rejoicing and celebration and apart from his presence, there's just weeping and gnashing of teeth. And okay, that's a bit extreme, but then do you know what Jesus said about who goes to hell? Most people. He said that there would be a highway to hell, like an eight lane freeway, and most people would end up there. And the road to heaven is a narrow road with very few footprints. And I want to say, "Jesus, really?" I mean, when someone dies, no matter how good or how bad they were, I don't want to say that. If someone's grieving and they think their uncle's pain is over, I don't want to say - I don't even want to think, "Man, his pain is just beginning." I mean, I know people who aren't religious who don't believe in Jesus, who belong to other world religions. Really?

See, sometimes when I read this book, I just don't - I don't agree with it. And that means that either I or Jesus gets the authority. We can't both have it our way. Either I submit to his teaching and admit he must be right, even if it feels wrong, or I tell him maybe there's something he got wrong and that I got right. And I want to talk to you about that today because the same thing's going to happen to you. Like if you actually listen to my advice and you decide to read the Bible and read all of it, you're going to find passages that offend you and shock you and you disagree with. It could be what he thought about gender or about marriage or about sexuality. It could be what he said about money or words or authority. It could be what he said about how you should treat your parents or your enemies. There's going to be something that just bothers you so much you're either going to want to skip it or you're going to want to change it.

So what do you do when that happens? When you and Jesus both can't have the last word, what do you do and what do you think? I want us to wrestle with that today because I wonder if some of you today aren't Christians because of that. It's not that you don't understand the Bible, it's that you do. And there's things that you know the church teaches not because they've twisted the pages of this book but because they've shared it faithfully and you just say, "I don't know if I can follow that. I don't know if I can believe that." And some of you have kind of lingered around the edges of religion, you know, you're interested in this whole forgiveness and salvation and eternal life thing. Jesus is curious to you but there's just parts of it still you can't - you can't get over the hurdles that just - they don't seem right.

So today, I want to dig in, what do you do, what do you think, and how do you deal with Jesus when you don't agree with him? So as you wrestle with that, I want to turn your attention to a story in the Bible that's so short and forgettable, you probably never heard it. It doesn't end up in children's Bibles, doesn't make, you know, the rotation of preaching in most churches. It's this little story about the church people that killed Jesus on the Tuesday before the Friday where they put him on the cross, when they confront Jesus and they want to talk about his teaching, his authority. So let's wrestle with that together as we open our Bibles to March 11 and I want to start today with verse twenty-seven.

It says, "They arrived again in Jerusalem and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders came to him. 'By what authority are you doing these things?' they asked. 'And who gave you authority to do this?'" So here these guys confront Jesus and they want to talk about authority and do you know the men who were asking him the question? The chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders. Now those are the three big groups that combine together to make up the ultimate authority in the early church called the Sanhedrin, like the Jewish Supreme Court. And you put these three groups together - the chief priests, like the pastors, the teachers, the teachers of law like the professors, and the elders, the movers and shakers - and they gather together and they say, "Jesus, what right do you have? I mean, you show up in our church, in our city, where we're supposed to be the teachers. Who gave you the authority to do this?" And the "this" they're referring to is the temple tantrum that Jesus threw. Have you ever heard that story? You know, the day before, on Monday of the week that Jesus died, he walks into their church during the Passover festival. This is like, you know, Christmas Eve service, and he flips out. It'd be like if a homeless guy came into church while I'm preaching on Christmas Eve and he flips over the table and he spray paints "Repent," across the screen. What would we do? We'd say, "What do you think you're doing? Like who

gave you the right.” We’d do the same thing, right? Our church leaders, our pastors, maybe our church council would stand up, we’d confront him and say, "What gives you the right to come into our church, in front of our people, on our turf, and do something like this?"

It's actually a really great question because if you know much about the life of Jesus, you know that he has no right from an earthly perspective to do this. He's not a chief priest. He's not even a priest. He doesn't live in Jerusalem and work in Jerusalem. He's from a carpentry shop in some hick town up north in Galilee. It says in verse 29: "Jesus replied, 'I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I'm doing these things. John's baptism - was it from heaven or of human origin? Tell me!'"

This is classic Jesus. This is so good. If you know much about Jesus' teaching, he was famous for doing like - I call it like the Jesus Judo flip, right? It's like someone thought they had him and they came up with the right question just to trap him and they throw the punch and he just used their momentum and he pinned them to the mat with one simple response. And that's what Jesus does here because he brings up his cousin John. Do you know much about John? John the Baptist? He was Jesus' cousin and John, if you read the Bible, he was - he was weird, okay? Any of you have a weird cousin? Anyone in the room want to admit to that? Hopefully your cousin isn't watching this online and thinking, "Hey, you weren't talking about me, were you?" The Bible says that John like lived out in the wilderness, like out in the woods, and ate bugs for breakfast and would not be caught dead wearing skinny jeans. And John, he was brash and he was blunt and he was brutal and he'd point his bony finger at people and he'd say, "Repent! Confess your sins! Be baptized and have your sins washed away. God knows you need it." And like the fire and brimstone would be enough as it was but you see, John didn't just say that to like the prostitutes and the greedy tax collectors. Do you know who he said that to? Church people. Alright, the scholars would come after worship and he'd point a finger at them and he says, "You. If you don't repent, if you don't change your ways, God in heaven, he is sharpening his ax and he is going to cut you down and throw you into the fires of hell." That's what John said. And Jesus said, "So, what do you think?" Was John from God? Should you have listened to him? Or was he just my crazy cousin?

You see, in John's teaching, the line between good and bad, between good people and evil people, was not drawn like we want to draw it at the heels of Hitler. It's not like, "Well, I'm not a terrorist and I haven't done that to a little kid so I must be a good person." No, John - if you'd read the Bible - he said that if you could eat so much that you just felt so full you were sick and then you throw out the leftovers and you don't give anything to the poor, John would say you're evil. And he actually said, if you had two tunics, like if you had two outfits to wear and there's someone who doesn't have any, we might say if you have so many clothes like the hangers don't fit and you have to shove the drawers just to get them shut and you don't give anything to those who don't have a change of clothes in your community, you are evil. And John would say if you're not content with your pay, if God's given you a job and you just grumble that you don't make enough money, you're evil. And if you don't pay what you owe to the government in taxes, you know, you want to fudge the numbers and stretch the truth and forget to report what you owe them, he says that's evil. And he said if you have a business and you try to get more from people than you really should, if you treat them in a way financially you would not want to be treated, you're evil. John would say the hooker on the corner is evil and the judgmental pastor is evil.

He'd say your worst enemy, the vilest terrorist, and your grandmother and best friend are evil and they need to repent and if they don't, they will be separated from God for all eternity.

And so Jesus' question for people like us was, "What do you think?" Think about that. Was he crazy? Fire and brimstone, old school, forgetting about God, or was he right? Was he sent from God with God-given authority?

That kind of reminds me about the story of G.K. Chesterton. About 100 years ago, it felt like the world was imploding. You know, world wars, advances in science just led to weapons in mass destruction, trench warfare, and delusional dictators. And so, this London newspaper asked their readers, "What's wrong with the world?" And G.K. Chesterton was a pretty good guy; he was a Christian and an author. He wrote back, I think, the shortest answer. He says, "What's wrong with the world? Dear Sir, I am. Sincerely, G.K. Chesterton."

You know, the biggest problem in the world is not Mussolini. It's not the guy with the rifle. It's the heart that's inside of my chest. "They discussed it among themselves and said, 'If we say 'from heaven,' he'll ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' But if we say, 'Of human origin,' (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet). So they answered Jesus, 'We don't know.'" They put their big hats together in a not so holy huddle and they realized they're stuck. To say that John was right and they have to admit they were wrong; that they abused their authority. That God was right and they needed to change. But say that John was crazy and they'd lose their earthly authority because people loved John and thought that he was sent from God and so what do they do? They punt. They plead the fifth. They dodge the question. They refuse to admit that Jesus could actually be right and they could be wrong.

I can only imagine the expression on Jesus' face when he says, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things." They realized that Jesus would not let them have the last word. And so, three days later on that Friday that we call "Good," they found nails and they murdered God. What a warm and fuzzy scripture! But it begs the question, since many of us are church people, what would we do? Or what do we do when Jesus flips us and he pins us and he corners us and he won't let us dodge the question and he says, "What do you think?" What do we do? Maybe we could picture it like this: Let's imagine that this stool is the seat of authority and whoever sits here gets the last word. And kind of by nature, you know, we all have an opinion about something; we all assume that we kind of know right and wrong, kind of how we're born in this position of authority. But then someone comes along and they're carrying that book and they claim that we might be wrong about something. It might be about our view of sexuality or of marriage or money or words or repentance or how to treat someone who hurts us. It could be about anything and they say that Jesus isn't cool if we agreed to disagree. That Jesus says we're sitting in his seat and he'd like it back. You find out there's not quite enough room here for you and Jesus; only one person gets to sit here. What do you do?

You know the challenging part is that when someone confronts you like that, they're probably going to be a lot like John. They're going to be weird. They're going to be flawed. They're going to be human and there's some way to dodge the issue, right? Maybe it happens when a kid is bold enough to talk to his parents about the way they use the family money. A kid who's actually reading the Bible and Jesus' love for the poor and he says, "You know, Dad, we're

spending thousands of dollars on another family vacation and I don't know, I've never seen us give anything to those in need. We can't go to church and pray, 'Give us our daily bread,' and then like not care about the 'us.' We can't spend money like this."

It might be the grandkid, the friend, who confronts racism or sexism in their family. Who says, "You know, Grandpa, the way you talk about black people, Mexican people, immigrants, you make it sound like they're a mistake and that God messed up. You can't - you can't claim to follow God and care about his will and talk like that." Maybe it happens when two guys sit down at the bar for a beer and one of them, you know, says, "Hey man, I love you, but every time we get together, you vent about your boss, about your brother. How can you claim to love being forgiven by God but it just seems like you don't want to forgive and give what you've received."

What happens in those moments? I'll tell you what happens: You'll know exactly why the church people murdered God. There will be something that appears in your heart, just like my heart, that will be so defensive it will reach for any weapon it can find to silence that voice so it doesn't confront us again. But today, I want to ask you - no, I'm going to beg you to give this seat up to Jesus. And not just because of the logic of it; that he's God and we're not. That he might maybe in his eternal existence have figured things out better than we have, not just the logic. I'm going to give you two reasons why when you disagree with him, why when it seems wrong it doesn't seem right and someone confronts you for your lifestyle, that you should give up the seat of authority and willingly die to the last word.

And these two reasons are so important, I want you to write them down. Here's the first one: Because of the law. Out of your own self-interest to not submit to Jesus' authority is spiritual suicide. I mean, you know that from an earthly perspective, right? If I was driving in my car and I'm smoking meth and I'm going forty and a paper bag in my hand and I'm driving with my knees and taking selfies at the same time and I get pulled over, I can't say to the officer, "Well, you know, agree to disagree." "You know, that's your law but I have my law. This might be the truth in the state of Wisconsin but I have my truth." Do you think that's going to work? I think it can but the law is over me and I live under it, whether I accept that in the moment or not.

So what do you think happens with God? Like, do you think there's a self-checkout line on Judgement Day? Do you think God's going to ask you to grade your own exam? You will be under his authority, no matter what you think. Here's what Jesus said. He said, "I will show you whom you should fear. Fear him who after your body has been killed has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him." Now, come on Jesus. He says, "Eternity is a long time and I'm coming back to judge the living and the dead. When I come back, do you want to be clinging to this seat? Do you really want to tell me, you know, what I want is not having you to be my Lord and my God?" Jesus says, "You don't want that. For the sake of the law, for the sake of eternity, don't be that stubborn. Don't let your own opinion get in the way of eternal happiness that I want to give you."

But the second reason, I think, is even better. It's not just because of the law, it's because of his love. If there's one thing that can change your mind, that can get you to bow the knee and submit to Jesus even when he seems crazy, it's his love.

So I've got to ask - what do you know about Jesus? Is he just a guy who wants to crush you with his authority? "I'm God. You're not. Deal with it." No. There's this great passage Jesus said. Let me show you one more passage today. He said in John 10: "No one takes my life from me but I lay it down on my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I receive from my Father." Jesus said, "All authority belongs to me." So what did he do with it? All the power - he was God - what did he do with it? He died to express his love to you. Three days after the conflict, he came in front of those same men - the Jewish Supreme Court - except this time, there was no Judo flip. This time there was no miracle. Jesus just sat there and he took it. He was ripped off of his throne and nailed to a cross. Do you know why? So that you could be loved for all eternity. So God's love would be so deep and so high and so strong that we would never get to the bottom of it. So that no matter what mess you brought into this church today, no matter what addiction and what struggle, no matter how many times you've doubted God or questioned God, that because of Jesus Christ, God's not holding it over your head. Instead, there's this amazing grace, there's this unconditional love that you and I can say, "God doesn't just put up with us. God loves us! The God of heaven and earth delights in us. Out of all the people on planet earth, he chose to accept and approve of me." That's what Jesus did and that's why he did it.

And so, are there things that I don't get? All the time. Are there times that I want to say, "Jesus, really?" All the time. But then I remember the Jesus I'm talking to and you should, too. A God who gave up everything so you could have everything. And so, we as a church say, "I'll follow you, Jesus. If I have to give up what I think is right, if I have to step off of this seat because with you there is joy everlasting and there's freedom from my soul."

You might have questions and you might have doubts but here's what I can tell you: Get to know Jesus. Because when you find out that he is the source of life and joy and peace and happiness, you'll give up everything for him, even the last word. So sit in the back seat and enjoy the ride.

Let's pray.

Jesus, if we don't - if we don't see the expression on your face and the scars in your hands, the things of this life will seem so much better. And so we ask you today for faith. That you would send the Holy Spirit into our hearts; that we could grasp how wide and high and long and deep is the love that you have for us right now. God, some of us have struggled with sexual sin and some of us with bitter hearts. Some of us have taught and believed false things; some of us have strayed from you and pursued the things of this life and yet, what you did is so sufficient. Your grace is amazing and it saves wretches like us and so we are so grateful, God, and we want that gospel to overwhelm our hearts.

I pray especially, heavenly Father, for those here who are doubting; who struggle with what you taught about marriage or divorce or creation or forgiveness. I pray, God, that you would help them to see that you're okay with the doubts and we don't have to figure that out to approach you and follow you and in your presence, we will find something that's so much bigger than our questions. Give us that kind of faith, God. That we could stand by every single word that you

taught; that we could be a faithful church and a faithful people that does not give into culture but believes you're God and you're good. And so, we pray for that kind of faith; that it would be among us and in us and you'd work powerfully through us. We pray all these things in Jesus' name and all God's people who agreed joined their voices and they said Amen.



TIME OF GRACE®

What if I Don't Agree With Jesus?

Study Notes

Summary

Authority. Jesus' enemies adored it. They refused to submit to Jesus' teaching, even when caught in their own duplicity. They missed finding true life because they refused to die to having the last word. Modern Americans face the same dilemma. Will Jesus be the Lord who gets the last word? Or will we cling to our plastic gavels and tell Jesus what to do?

- **Mark 11:27,28:** They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you authority to do this?”
- **Mark 11:29,30:** Jesus replied, “I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!”
- **Mark 11:31-33:** They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ But if we say, ‘Of human origin’ . . .” (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.) So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.” Jesus said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”
- Give up authority . . .
 1. because of the _____. (Luke 12:5: I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.)
 2. because of his _____. (John 10:18: No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.)

Points to Ponder

1. Which of Jesus' teachings rub you the wrong way? How have you dealt with those doubts in the past? How did today's message make you reconsider your attitude?
2. Read Romans 8:7,8. How does Paul describe the sinful nature/flesh that lives inside our hearts? Why is that important to remember when we question one of Jesus' teachings?
3. Meditate on Psalm 131 and summarize its meaning. How does knowing that "the LORD" is the special name of the God who is always faithful to his loving promises help explain the quiet trust that David had in God?
4. List five examples of God's love that you experienced this past week. How does his fatherly heart make it easier to trust in him with all your heart instead of leaning on your own understanding?

Homework for Next Week

Read Mark 12:1-12.

"Those who have a saving interest in Christ must be willing to part with all for him, leave all to follow him. Whatever stands in opposition to Christ, or in competition with him for our love and service, we must cheerfully quit it, though ever so dear to us."

—Matthew Henry