



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Mark 11:27-12:12 Mark

“Authority Questioned”

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you, Howard. Our passage this morning is in Mark chapter 11 and chapter 12. We'll begin with 11:27 and go through 12:12, and the reason for that is this is one continuous event, one series of events in one day and you realize that if you turn over to Matthew 21, where it's all contained in the same chapter, but for some reason there's a chapter division in Mark. But we're going to treat it as a continuous succession of events. Mark 11, beginning with 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?’ And 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.’ 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 multitude, for all considered John to have been a prophet indeed. Answering Jesus, they said, ‘We do not know.’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.’

“And He began to speak to them in parables: ‘A man PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT, AND DUG A VAT UNDER THE WINE PRESS AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. At the *harvest* time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order to

receive *some* of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers. They took him, and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent them another slave, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully. And he sent another, and that one they killed; and *so with* many others, beating some and killing others. He had one more *to send*, a beloved son; he sent him last *of all* to them, saying, "They will respect my son." But those vine-growers said to one another, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!" They took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others.

" 'Have you not even read this Scripture: "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER *stone*; THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES?"

"And they were seeking to seize Him, and *yet* they feared the multitude, for they understood that He spoke the parable against them. And *so* they left Him and went away."

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in it together. Shall we pray?

Our gracious heavenly Father, we do praise You and thank You for this Sunday morning and our opportunity to come together, to gather together as Your people and to study Your word, Your revelation to us. And we pray that You would bless us with an understanding of it. We are helpless of ourselves to grasp the meaning of this text, and yet it speaks so much to the human condition. Bless us, Father, that we would understand it and in understanding it, understand You better and understand Your grace and live in light of it and live lives that are pleasing to You. Fit us and arm us for the week ahead, that we would be good and effective servants of You. Do that through the Word of God. It sanctifies us, and so we pray that it would have that sanctifying influence upon our hearts this morning, that You would bless us.

Bless this whole church. We pray for the elders and the deacons that You'd give them wisdom and give them diligence in the task that You've laid upon them, but give that, really, Father, to all of us involved in this ministry which involves all of the members of this church. Help us to sense our responsibilities to one another, our responsibilities to You and seek to live lives of mutual assistance to one another, lives in which we draw closer to You, first of all and

foremost of all, and that we have fellowship with You and live in light of that and in Your presence at all times. Bless us, Father, to that end. Bless those who teach and we pray for the Sunday school teachers and pray that You'd bless their work. We thank You for their diligence. We thank You for their willingness to sacrifice time. And yet, Father, what a small sacrifice. In fact, it's not even right to call it that because it is a privilege to study Your Word and to share that and impart that truth with others. Thank You for the privilege and thank You for those that have come forward to do that and minister in that way. Bless them. Bless those to whom they minister. Bless the secretaries and others who work in the church to just keep the physical aspect of it going. And we pray that You'd give them joy in their service and their work.

We pray Your blessings upon us as a church in that way and we pray for those who are in need. And we are a needy people in many ways, Father. Physically we are in need, and we pray You'd bless those who are in need financially, those who have needs of a physical nature that are sick, we pray that You'd give them strength and encouragement. Help them to look to You. Not only the author and perfecter of faith, but truly the great physician, One who does give healing, when it is Thy will.

We pray, Lord, for our nation and we ask that You'd give our leaders wisdom. We pray for president Clinton. We pray that You'd give him wisdom in very difficult days. Give wisdom to all of those in government as we face times of political unrest. We pray that wisdom would be given, that proper decisions would be made, not only in international affairs, but particularly at this time in national affairs with natural calamities occurring in the east coast and particularly in the midwest on the Mississippi River. We pray for wisdom as to deal with that matter and pray You'd bless those who are suffering at this present time. We ask You, Father, because You are the One that sends the rain and sends drought. You are the one who can shut up the heavens. And if that be Your will, we pray that You would do so. In spite of all that we hear, Father, about Mother Nature and about what the river is doing, it's You, Father, that do all things. You are the rider of the clouds. You are the King of this world. You sit upon the vault of heaven, and all men, as great as some may be, are but grasshoppers beneath You. So, Father, we look to You as the One who is Lord of nature. Pray that You would bring blessing and through all of the difficulties that have occurred, may spiritual wisdom come from it.

Bless those who are suffering, and bless those particularly in our assembly. We pray for our time together now. We pray that You would bless us with insight into Your truth. Bless us as we sing our final hymn. May it be joyful in our hearts and may it prepare us for a time of study together. Bless our time together. May this be a time of edification for us, a time in which we glorify You. We have much to glorify You for. It's in Christ's name we pray, Amen.

When I was in seminary and we would sing this hymn and we came to that last line, "When He shall come with trumpet sound/Oh may I then in Him be found," the man who would lead singing would change that and tell us that we should sing, "Oh then in Him I shall be found." I was talking with Dr. Johnson last Sunday and he was commenting on that, and Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer was evidently the originator of that change in the line, and that is a good line to change. It's more consistent with the hymn. If He's the solid rock and we depend upon Him, then if we are in Him, we certainly shall be found in Him because of His grace.

Well, our text this morning is Mark 11:27 through 12:12. Sports has given us a lot of our modern clichés and parables, and few men in the field of sports have made more of a significant contribution to this collective wisdom than Yogi Berra. He gave us such lines as Berra's law: you can observe a lot just by watching. Y'all are a lot sharper than that first hour. I said that, they kind of, "Oh, that makes sense if you watch, you observe it." I'm learning something this morning. What else did he say? Well, he said, it's déjà vu all over again. I think his best known line, however, is, "It ain't over 'til it's over."

And I can remember in 1957 in my grade school classroom in Kansas City listening to the world series on radio and rooting for the New York Yankees. Our teacher had allowed us to listen to part of the game that day. She did so, I think, reluctantly. She wasn't particularly interested in the game and the girls in the class, for the most part, weren't particularly interested, but the boys were. We were enthusiastically listening. And I remember I think it was in the – it was in the seventh game of the series – and the Yankees were trailing Milwaukee when Yogi Berra got up to bat and hit a home run with men on base and it put the Yankees out in the lead and we began to celebrate. And some of us celebrated too enthusiastically, namely I celebrated too enthusiastically, jumped up, knocked my desk over. It came to the floor with a thunderous crash, which gave the teacher the excuse she was looking for to turn the radio off and get our noses back into arithmetic, or spelling, or whatever it was. Well, I was a leper for the day, as you can imagine, but what was

worse is that when the game was over, the Yankees ended up losing it and the series. It wasn't over when Yogi hit his home run. So it's true. It ain't over 'til it's over.

And that's true not only in sports, but in other areas, as well. It's true in the Christian experience and in the whole unfolding of human events. And we see this in our Lord's own life. He's entered Jerusalem on palm Sunday to a wildly enthusiastic crowd that has received Him as King. And yet the kingdom doesn't come that day. It wasn't over on that Sunday, because at the same time, opposition was taking shape against Him from powerful men inside the city so that by the end of the week, He was hanging on a cross between common criminals. But it wasn't over at the cross and the Lord who knew exactly what would unfold in that last week of His life, will inform His enemies of that very fact.

On Monday, He returned to Jerusalem, invaded the temple, which was the very domain of the priests, and He shut down their marketplace. As a result, Mark tells us, the religious leaders began in earnest hatching a plot to destroy Him. Now their plot and their scheme did not begin at that point. They had been scheming before then, and you turn over to John's gospel and you see this in John chapter 11, after the Lord has raised Lazarus from the dead. The religious leaders become very concerned because of what's taking place, and so they meet together, the priests and the Pharisees in Jerusalem, to discuss the problem. And they said, "If we let Him *go on* like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."

They're thinking very practical of their situation. They weren't thinking in terms of truth. They weren't thinking, "Now, here's a man who has raised someone from the dead. Perhaps He's more than just a man. When have we seen that in our lifetime? Maybe He is the Messiah." No. They begin to think, "What's going to happen when the Romans see this enthusiasm? They're going to come and they're going to take away our place." So this was wholly a pragmatic decision on their part. They were acting and thinking in terms of expediency, not in truth. Truth was irrelevant to these men. Caiaphas then makes his famous statement, "It is expedient that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish." And so to protect themselves, to protect their interests financial and political, they discuss removing Him.

But now with the Lord's entrance into Jerusalem as King with the excitement that He has generated, things become very urgent with them, and Mark writes that they began seeking how to

destroy Him. That was on Monday. By Tuesday, they were well organized and they were ready to engage the Lord in controversy by challenging Him with a series of questions. In fact, this day has been called “the day of questions” because one group after another approaches the Lord with its own question designed to trip Him up in His own words. It was a clever strategy because it was customary among the Jews to stop a noted teacher, a well-known rabbi and ask Him a question. And the people loved the exchanges that would take place between the rabbi and the person who was asking the question. And the Lord was very accessible to those who had questions.

And so we read in verse 27 that while “He was walking in the temple – ” probably in one of the porches that surrounded the court of the Gentiles where rabbis often walked with their students and talked or sat there and gave them instruction, a very dignified group of men approach Him, “ – the chief priests and the scribes and the elders – ” all members of the Sanhedrin, which was the Jewish supreme court, the ruling body of the Jewish people. So these were powerful men. These were aristocrats, lawyers, men of wealth, and men of power and authority. And they came to Him with a question about authority. They wanted to know by what authority He had done these things, by what authority He had come into Jerusalem, He’d received the acclamations of the people, by what authority He had entered into their temple and shut down their marketplace, and by what authority He was teaching and teaching the things that He was teaching the way that He was teaching them. So they’re asking, “Who gave You this authority?”

And on the surface, it might seem like a legitimate question. After all, He came into town riding a wave of intense popularity and He’d shaken things up in the highest levels of the city. So what did He claim as His authority for doing these things? Was it divine authority? Or was it simply human authority? It was a question about His identity. Was He a prophet? Was He a mere man? Was He the Messiah? In appearance, as I say, it was legitimate. But in reality, it was an attempt to simply ensnare Him in an incriminating answer. If He denied His authority, that is denied that it was from God, then He would lose influence with the people. That’s certainly what they would like to see, very disturbed by the world going after Him, as they say. So they’d like to hear Him deny that it’s divine authority, but if He didn’t, if He said His authority was divine, it came from God, then perhaps they would have a basis upon which to accuse Him of blasphemy.

Well, this was the real purpose of their question. It wasn’t inquiry. It was entrapment. And the Lord knew that. He knew their hearts. He knows all things. He searches the hearts. He

knows the intents of men. He knows what we're thinking right at this moment and He wasn't fooled by that. And so rather than answer their question, He asks them a question. We read in verses 29-30, "And 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.' " Now by asking this question, He wasn't avoiding their question. And we sometimes hear you can't answer a question with a question. Well, that's not true. You can if by asking the question and the correct answer is given, then the correct answer to the original question is given. And that's the same here. If they answered His question correctly, they would have the answer to their own question. So He's not avoiding their question, but at the same time, in asking this question, He as one writer put it, has put them on the horns of a dilemma because whichever answer they would give would work against them and work against their purposes.

And they realize that immediately, and so they back away, sort of huddled together and begin to discuss things, talk things over, and realize that if they said that John's baptism was from heaven, that his whole ministry was divine, that he was truly a prophet of God, then they knew that He would respond to them and say, "Why didn't you follow him?" They're morally obligated to follow one that they recognize as being of God, being a prophet. That would be difficult because John's come on the scene and he has pointed to Jesus as the Messiah. He's the forerunner, and you see that in John's gospel. The Lord Jesus comes walking by, and he says, "Behold the Lamb of God." And what does he do? He sends his disciples after Him. That was the purpose. So if they recognized that his baptism was from heaven, then they had to answer the next question, "Why aren't you following him?"

But if they deny that, say that his baptism is not from God, well then they would infuriate the multitude who, as Mark says, considered John to have been a prophet. These men were afraid of the people. What a commentary that is on them. They're the leaders of the nation. They're the spiritual shepherds and they fear the people. Tells you a lot about their motive in their heart. People don't fear those whom they love and they'll do that which is necessary for those whom they love. And elders in this church, if they love the people in this church, will put the people ahead of themselves and their own place. But they didn't love the people. They loved themselves and they were afraid of the people. That's the evidence that they lacked any love for them. And so we see that here. We see it throughout this gospel and throughout the gospels, the attitude they had. They were afraid of the people.

So what the Lord has done is He's masterfully turned the trap on the men who had laid it. Not by avoiding it, not by avoiding the question. The answer was available to any honest seeker. But because by their pragmatism they had been tripped up by the Lord's question. And so rather than answer, they plead ignorance. "We don't know," they say. They knew. They knew the answer. Calvin was right. They knew the truth, but preferred to shuffle rather than acknowledge it so that their tyranny wouldn't be impaired. See, they hadn't come seeking the truth. They were seeking a way around the truth, seeking a ground for avoiding the truth. And men do that. Not just these men, men generally do that because, as John tells us, men love the darkness rather than the light for their deeds are evil.

Nature gives us illustrations of that principle. What happens when it's 2:00 in the morning and you haven't been able to get to sleep and you're restless and you think, "Well, maybe a glass of milk will help. Maybe that leftover pie, some chicken in there, and I'll go into the kitchen." And so you go into the kitchen and you flip on the lights and what happens? There's all kinds of movement. Not in your house, I know, and not in my house. But it happens in people's houses. Creatures of the night. They **hate** the darkness. And men by their very nature are creatures of the spiritual night. They don't seek after God. "There is none who seeks for God," Paul writes. That's the Bible. That's the teaching of Scripture. You won't hear that dictum from the world. The world will say, "We do seek the truth. We seek God. We do philosophy, love of wisdom, love of knowledge." And men do philosophy, and every philosophy that's done is done, constructed as an honest attempt to discover the truth, but the truth is not found in human philosophy because the mind of man is fallen. Human reason is affected by the fall. It is darkened.

At home, my children and I are going through the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Confession of Faith. At least we're trying to. We do it in kind of fits and starts. More consistent sometimes than others, but what we have come to in our study at this point is the fall of man and what that has done to man and his condition. And, as you know, the catechism has a series of questions and answers. And so we seek to memorize those and they recite them to me. And here are my kids. They're right – why don't you kids come on up here? Show 'em ____? They're starting to slink a little bit. They could do it if they came up here. And I could do it, too, but since I've got it written out here, I'm going to just read it from memory.

First question is: "Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?" And the answer to that is: "Into a state of sin and misery." And then the catechism elaborates on that state of sinfulness. "Of what does it consist?" And it basically gives three points. First of all, the guilt of Adam's first sin. So we're all born guilty. Why? Because Adam was our representative and the text for that is Romans 5:12. He represented us, and when a person represents another, the deeds of that person are considered to be the deeds of those he represents. Because Adam represented us and became guilty, we, those he represented, and he represented all mankind, have become guilty in the eyes of God. We are guilty of Adam's first sin. But it doesn't stop there with our guilt. Because of our guilt, we, as the catechism says, are in want of original righteousness. We're not perfect anymore. We often hear that, "nobody's perfect." That's a great theological statement. Nobody is perfect. Everybody lacks that original righteousness. We are fallen creatures.

And thirdly, it consists of the corruption of the whole nature. Body and soul, we are corrupt. And when you get to be my age, you know how that affects the body. Your back starts hurting. Your joints start hurting. That's the way it is. But more seriously than that, it affects the mind. It affects the will. The mind of man is darkened. He doesn't understand spiritual things. He does not want spiritual things. He is in rebellion against spiritual things. And so when he constructs his philosophies, it reflects that. His heart and his mind are bent away from the truth. And so what he seeks is a way from the truth, that is the truth of God. Now, in saying this I'm not saying there is nothing to be gained in reading philosophy.

I'm not saying there is no truth in philosophy. What I'm saying is that the truth is not there in the sense of the truth, the truth about where man came from and where man is going, who man is and who God is and what the solution to the human condition is not found in philosophy. Because while men will accept all kinds of light, they won't accept the light, they won't accept that light which exposes their condition and their need of a savior. They won't accept the light of the gospel which calls men into submission to Christ, who is the way and the truth and the life. They may give lip service to Him, but He will not be at the center of their philosophy. He will be at the center of a Christian philosophy, but not of the world's philosophy.

And these priests and scribes who came to the Lord and elders, they're really just a mirror of the human heart and human nature. We see ourselves in them, Jew and Gentile alike. There is none righteous, not even one. There is none who understands. There is none who seeks for God.

And we Christians, too, lest we become rather proud in our condition of being a redeemed people, of being sanctified and restored, in our present state, there is enough sin in each of us that we, too, can resist the truth when the truth is inconvenient, when it challenges us in ways that we don't want to be challenged. We're a lot like those Israelites who came out of Egypt carrying their idols. They carried them through the wilderness wandering.

In our heart, theologically we may have an exalted view of man. In fact, the things that I've said about the heart of man, things that the Westminster Confession says about man may offend some of you. You don't like to hear that. You don't like to hear about total depravity. You don't like to hear about the total helplessness of man and the bondage of the will. That's an idol when we exalt ourselves and we see worth in ourselves. Or ethically it may be the idol that we have, morally an idol. It may be pride. It may be self interest. It may be a critical spirit. All kinds of things like that that we could list, and when the Bible shines on those errors, we recoil from them. We rebel from them. We don't want to hear about that.

So that's common to all of us, to some extent. But the only way to grow, the only way to cast off those idols, the only way to cast off the sins that so entangle us is by submitting to the truth, by living in the light of God's Word, believing it and obeying it. And fortunately, God never abandons us to our willfulness, and He has placed within our hearts His Holy Spirit, who has sealed us, who keeps us, who is our teacher, who is our guide, who is our enabler. And we must be continually looking to Him and following His leading and praying to the Lord and bringing our problems before Him and seeking His wisdom and His will in our lives. Fortunately, He never stops dealing with us and correcting us and bringing us to the truth.

But to these men who came to the Lord who knew the truth and could have given the right answer to the question that He gave, and yet chose to shuffle in order to carry out their tyranny and plead ignorance over the whole matter, the Lord gives them no light. They won't answer His question, and so He answers them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things." There's a terrible truth that runs throughout Scripture, and that is that where light is rejected, light is withheld. And when we will not believe the truth and when we resist it, we won't progress into further truth. In fact, we'll begin to regress into the darkness. And these men weren't seeking the truth so the Lord leaves them in suspense. He doesn't answer their question.

But the Lord doesn't leave the matter there. He goes on to give a parable about a vineyard in which He indicates through this parable His identity and the authority with which He could do the things that He had done. And in so doing, He warns the people with this parable against the unbelieving leaders. It's a parable about Israel's failure. The meaning of this parable would have been obvious to the leaders and to the people, as well, because Isaiah told a very similar parable in Isaiah chapter 5 in which the vineyard symbolized Israel and the owner of the vineyard symbolized God. The owner planted this vineyard, provided everything to make it profitable, but it produced only worthless grapes and was destroyed. It was a familiar passage to the Jews. It's one that they sang in the synagogues. And so the Lord, using the same imagery, tells of a landowner who planted a vineyard and made good provision, built a tower in it, had a wine press in it, built a wall around it, and then when he's finished building this, he rented it out to some vine-growers. They were sharecroppers, tenant farmers who would cultivate the vineyard in return for a share of the produce and give the rest to the owner. Then having hired the tenants, he left, and Mark writes, "went on a journey," and was gone for a long time, long enough for the vines to grow and establish themselves and be productive. And long enough, also, for the tenants to resent the owner and begin to consider the vineyard their own. After all, they were the ones that were doing all the work.

And so at harvest time, when the owner sent one of his slaves to collect the produce, the tenants refused to honor their agreement. Verse 3 states that they took the slave "and beat him and sent him away empty-handed." Well, the owner sent another slave, and he was treated the same way. "They wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully. And he sent another, and that one they killed; and *so with* many others, beating some and killing others." We read that and we're amazed at the callous cruelty of these tenants, but what's even more amazing to us is how patient the owner was with these tenants. By now, any other owner would have taken strong measures against them. He would have used the law, which was on his side, against these vine-growers and administered some rough justice, to say the least. But this owner was unusual. He's not like any owner. He's unique.

He sent servant after servant and now still patient, he decides to send one more. This one was special. Verse 6 calls him his "beloved son," which probably means his only son. He sent him saying, "They will respect my son." But they didn't. When they saw him coming, they began to scheme among themselves. "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be

ours!" According to Jewish law, if an heir did not come forward to claim a piece of land, then it was considered ownerless, and after a period of three years, the farmers would then be able to take it as their own. Evidently, they were thinking of that law, and evidently they had forgotten about the owner. Perhaps they thought that he was dead or, if they knew he was alive, perhaps they thought that he would continue to not enforce his legal rights. Either way, they thought that the land would be theirs if they killed his son. And so, they carried out their plot. Verse 8, "They took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard."

Now what? The owner had been patient and gracious. He had been long suffering to a fault, we might think. But now this. His only son, his beloved son, brutally murdered. What will he do? Well, that's the question that the Lord puts to his audience. "What will the owner of the vineyard do?" Will he ignore this act of violence? Will his patience continue. No. He won't ignore this. This time, he will personally visit the tenants and visit them with justice. "He will come –" the Lord says "– and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others."

Now parables are stories with meanings and the meaning of this parable was clear to all who listened. The landowner is God. The vineyard is Israel. The tenants are the leaders of the nation. The slaves are servants. They are the prophets. The Old Testament frequently refers to the prophets as God's servants. And the son is the Lord Jesus. Now, there's always a danger in interpreting a parable, and that is the danger of pressing some of the details too far, beyond their intended meaning. For example, I don't think that the wall and the tower are details that need to be given specific meaning. I think that the significance of those aspects of the parable are simply to say that God made adequate provision for Israel. He cared for the nation and He made provision that it would be fruitful.

And the fact that the owner of the vineyard hoped that the tenants would respect his son shouldn't be taken as giving God's expectation for His Son when He sent Him into the world. After all, the Lord has been telling His disciples for some time that He's going to Jerusalem to die, and the Father sent Him into the world for that purpose. Peter makes that very clear on the day of pentecost when in Acts 2:23, he states that Christ "was delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God." This was planned. So we shouldn't read that into the parable.

The point is God dealt graciously and patiently with His people throughout their history, in fact more patiently with His people than this owner of the vineyard dealt with those vine-growers.

But they willfully rebelled against him. He showed great love to His people. His people rejected that. He sent His prophets, His servants to warn the nation, but the nation rejected their message and abused them. And you see this throughout Israel's history. Jezebel destroyed the prophets of God and hunted down Elijah. By God's grace, never got him, but he was a hunted man by her. Jeremiah was beaten and humiliated, cast into a cistern, eventually taken against his will down into Egypt. Isaiah, the great prophet, was sawn asunder by a wooden saw. God was patient with the nation.

And finally sent His Son, the greatest act of love of all. In the parable, the landowner's son is called his "beloved son." He's not a servant. He's distinct from all of those servants. He is the landowner's only son. And so, too, the Lord. He's distinct from all the prophets. He was a prophet. He is the prophet that Moses looked forward to in Deuteronomy 18, but He's far more than that. He is wholly other. He is God's unique son. They came asking Him by what authority He had done these things, and He tells them here in this parable by what authority He'd done it. In the authority of God, the authority that is invested in Him as God's only begotten Son, His beloved Son. It's an expression that echoes John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son into the world that those who believe in Him would be saved." And the One whom the Father sent, men slew just as willfully as the tenants did the landowner's son.

And in telling this parable, the Lord was again showing that He knew what His end would be in Jerusalem. He knew that the kingdom wasn't going to be established by Him when He came in, that He'd be rejected. And He knew that these leaders of the nation were the guilty ones. He'd come into the vineyard in coming into Jerusalem. And they were guilty of a crime they hadn't committed yet because they had committed it in their heart and He knew their hearts. Nothing took Him by surprise. He'd come for this purpose. He'd been telling His disciples, as we've seen for some time, what His purpose in coming was, and now He tells the rulers themselves. And so just as the landowner destroyed the vine-growers and gave the vineyard to others, so judgment would fall upon the nation and their place of privilege and service would be taken away from them and given to others.

Historically, the destruction occurred in AD 70, when Rome sacked Jerusalem and scattered the Jewish nation across the face of the earth. But the shift of blessing from Israel to the others is witnessed in the book of Acts. We see it in chapter 10. Seems to begin there with the

conversion of Cornelius, a Gentile. And then in Acts chapter 13, Paul and Barnabas are rejected by the Jews. Their message is resisted, and so they say to them, "We are turning to the Gentiles." And the Gentiles, we read, rejoiced at that news. So it begins before the destruction occurred, this shift of blessing. And Paul describes this under the figure of the olive tree in Romans 11. Unbelieving Israel, the natural branches, was broken off and believing Gentiles, wild branches, were grafted in. So the work of the kingdom, the service of God that had been entrusted to Israel is now taken from them and given to another nation, given to the nations, given to Gentiles who are called out of the nations. Paul makes it clear that the future of the natural branches is a good future. They will be grafted in so Israel's loss of privilege as a nation, as a people, is only temporary. It's gone on for some 2,000 years now, but it's not a permanent loss.

However, for those who reject the Lord, for that generation of our Lord's day and others down through the centuries, it is permanent. The Lord's generation was a lost generation and there's great irony in all of this. The leaders oppose the Lord in order to preserve their place, but it was a great miscalculation. As Augustine wrote, "They slew Him that they might possess and because they slew Him, they lost." And everyone loses who resists the Lord. The story never ends with saying no to Christ. Expediency never ultimately achieves a good and a lasting end. And the Lord warns the nation of that in this place, in this parable.

But He wasn't finished. In verse 10, He moves from the parable to prophecy and quotes Psalm 118, where a similar action of rejection is described. This is the same Psalm that the people sang two days earlier when the Lord entered Jerusalem. As He came in, they were singing, "Hosanna!" "Lord, save!" And I can't help but believe that as they were singing, "Hosanna!" His mind was turning upon this verse of which He reminds them here, verse 10, "The stone which the builders rejected, This became the chief corner *stone*." Psalm pictures builders or stonemasons examining a great stone like one of those that's used in Solomon's temple and perhaps the psalmist was looking back on Solomon's day and considering events, prophetic events in light of that temple. And this stone that's rejected was rejected as being useless as defective, but that same stone becomes the chief corner stone of the temple, a stone that's marvelous, the psalmist writes. Marvelous stone that had been rejected.

Now, historically, this Psalm may have been written about David. It does seem to have a king as its main personality and David would certainly fit well with that because David was

rejected. He was overlooked. You remember when he is anointed by Samuel, God sends him to the house of Jesse, and he goes there, and Jesse lines up all of his handsome, tall sons, and Samuel goes down the line and it's not one of them. He's puzzled. What happened? I know God told me to come here and anoint one of these sons. And Jesse can't believe it because he knows it's got to be one of these. It can't be this other son he's got out in the fields, this little boy, David. But he says, "Yeah. I've got another one. We'll go get him." And they get him, and it's David, of course. This ruddy young boy comes and he's anointed. But he was overlooked by his family, rejected by his family. Samuel wasn't looking for him. Goliath despised him. Saul persecuted him. David is surrounded by enemies, and yet it's David, this rejected person, that God exalts to be the great king of Israel. Perhaps the Psalm is about him or perhaps it's about Israel itself, which was surrounded by hostile nations, but which God made a great nation, made a light among the nations.

Well, however we understand the Psalm historically, the stone that we read of here is a type of Christ, and we can say that for a number of reasons. The Lord, obviously sees it that way, but Isaiah seems to have interpreted it that way because in Isaiah chapter 8 the prophet speaks of the Messiah as a stone and a rock who will be a sanctuary to some but a stone of stumbling to others. In chapter 28, Isaiah writes of him as "a tested stone," and "a costly cornerstone" laid in Zion. So there was or there is an Old Testament theology of the stone. And the Lord saw in that stone of this Psalm and Isaiah a foreshadowing of Himself and the apostles did, as well. They applied this to our Lord. When Peter stood before the Sanhedrin in Acts chapter 4, standing before some of these same men, standing before Caiaphas and Annas, he made this declaration to them. "He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, *but* which became the very corner *stone*." The cornerstone which Paul says in the cornerstone of the church in Ephesians 2:20.

A cornerstone has a function. The function of the cornerstone is to give support, but not just to give support. It gives direction. It determines the position of the walls, the shape of the whole building. And that's exactly what our Lord does. One, He gives us support. He's the solid rock upon which we stand. But He gives us direction. As we live in Christ, we become like Christ. In Him, we are joined not to a dead, cold stone, but we are joined to a living stone that transfers His supernatural life into us, constantly, continually, every moment we are living a supernatural life and that is a life-changing power that is within us, sanctifying us and making us

more and more like Him so that we are a temple that resembles Him. When people see you and they see me, they should be seeing Christ. They should see something of Him in us.

And those priests were seeing something of Him in Peter and John as they stood before them. And you can imagine the frustration that Annas and Caiaphas must have felt as Peter boldly, triumphantly stood before them. Here they thought they'd gotten rid of the problem, they'd devised this wonderful scheme, this clever scheme, and it had gotten rid of this man who was a threat. And now there are two men in front of them saying the same things and those two men were just two of many because this one Man had now become a movement, had become a temple that was growing and spreading. They rejected the stone, but that stone they rejected became the chief cornerstone because God would not allow Him to remain rejected, but raised Him up from the dead, glorified and triumphant. And so the Psalm continues in verse 11. This came about from the Lord; and it is marvelous in our eyes." It's not over until God says it's over. And it wasn't over until He had vindicated His Son.

And for you and for me, it is still not over because when He raised Jesus, our representative, He raised all of His elect people and caused all who believe in Him down through the ages to triumph over the grave. What the representative does is considered to have been done by those He represents. He removed our guilt, that guilt of Adam's first sin. He has restored that original righteousness positionally before God and He is removing the corruption of that nature now through the work of His Holy Spirit. And so what the Lord has done is truly marvelous in our eyes. God vindicates what men reject and because He vindicated His Son, He will vindicate all who believe in His Son. In this world, we will have tribulation. That's a promise from the Lord. Trials are inevitable. The world will treat us just like it treated Him.

But we're to take courage. As the Lord says, "I have overcome the world." Because He's overcome it, we shall overcome it. The evil that we see triumphing today will be put down. It's not over yet. All of the schemes of men will be reversed. All of our trials will be removed and rewarded. Are you in a difficult marriage? Are your conditions at work discouraging and debilitating? Are you suffering physically or financially? Don't be discouraged. It's not over. Remain faithful. Study the Word. Live in its light. Reject expediency. Don't set out on a path that's contrary to the Lord's will. Continue on His path, even though we can't see the end of it at this point. Continue on. As the great hymn puts it, "All now mysterious shall be bright at last."

That hope that we have that that hymn expresses, that our Lord states in John 16, that hope is grounded on the resurrection of our Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes. But the world doesn't see it. To the world, He's nothing but a defective stone. But to us who see with the eyes of faith, he is the Savior. He has become a sanctuary to us. Centuries ago during the Renaissance, there was a great block of marble in the city of Florence. The greatest sculptors of the day rejected it as defective and for 40 years it was abandoned on a rubbish heap until a young Michelangelo saw it and in that block of rejected marble, he saw the image of a great subject. He bought this stone that had been rejected by the experts and from it he sculpted his 14-foot masterpiece, David. He had eyes to see what the experts didn't see, and by God's grace, we do too.

We see the magnificence and the glory of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The leaders of our Lord's day, those men who had come to Him with their challenging questions, they didn't see that glory, but they did understand what He was saying and they understood the indictment that He made against them and They became angry and they would have seized Him, Mark says, if they could have, but they feared the crowds. And so we read in verse 12, "they left Him and went away." By the end of the week, it will appear that they had triumphed over Him. They will slay Him. And as Augustine said, in order to possess, they will put Him to death, but as a result of that, they will lose everything.

They will fulfill in that act – in fact, in what they were doing during this week, they were fulfilling – what David wrote about in Psalm 2, "the nations devising a vain thing." And it was a vain thing that they were devising. This rebellion of theirs would fail and it fails in every generation. It fails with every individual who refuses the Lord, who rejects the Lord. And so the final words of that Psalm were for our Lord's generation, but they are for every generation. They are for every individual who hears the gospel of Jesus Christ. Kiss the Son. Do homage to the Son, lest He become angry and you perish in the way. We kiss the Son by believing in Him as our Savior, as our Lord, and living in obedience to Him. A person can do that early in life, and that's best. **You** children, if you've not believed in Jesus Christ, don't delay. Put your faith in Him. But if you're older, up in years, it's not too late. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

There's an illustration of that. We began with baseball. We'll end on that subject to illustrate the point. Ty Cobb was one of the game's all time greats. For 12 years, he led the American League in batting average. In fact, for four years, he batted over 400, which is quite

amazing. He's one of the most competitive players to ever play the game. I remember reading about him, how he would slide into base when he was stealing a base with his cleats up and probably spiked many a man, and was not a particularly popular man. When he died, he was a lonely man. In fact, at his funeral few of baseball were represented there. But while he died almost alone, he didn't die alone. Christ was with him. And on his deathbed, July 17, 1961, he received Christ as Savior. He said, "You tell the boys I'm sorry it was the last part of the ninth that I came to know Christ. I wish it had taken place in the first of the first."

So it's true. In spiritual things as well as in sports, it ain't over until it's over. If you're here this morning and you don't know Christ, believe in Him. Don't delay. Trust in Him. Stop resisting Christ. Don't reject Him as a defective stone, but receive Him as a sanctuary. Kiss the Son who died in the place of sinners that men and women, that sinners, that all who believe in Him might have forgiveness of sin and life everlasting. Shall we stand now for the benediction?

Gracious heavenly Father, we do thank You for the grace that You have given to us. We thank You for Your patience with us. We look at these leaders of the nation, their callous approach to the Lord – *[glitch in audio]* – that we are, but for Your grace. But only by Your grace were our hearts open to the truth, did our minds understand and long for that which You offer. Otherwise, we would have been in that rebellious company. Thank You for bringing us to Yourself. Help us, Father, to live under the light of Scripture that searches our hearts, not that we resist the truth. Keep us from that. And we pray that if there be any in attendance who do not know Christ, that You would give them no rest or peace until they see their need of a Savior and come to Him. We pray these things in our Savior's name, Amen.