



CANYON HILLS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: Mark

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The Authority of Jesus

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I want to have you turn in your Bibles to Mark, chapter 11. If you don't have a Bible, there are Bibles in front of you, underneath the seats, and so you can grab one there. I just want to encourage you to turn over to Mark 11.

How many of you, by a show of hands, have been here for less than six weeks? You started coming in 2018. Show of hands. How many of you are a bit newer here? Welcome! I'm so glad you guys are here. Thank you for coming, whether it's your first time, second time, sixth time, or however that looks. Thanks for coming and worshipping with us.

This morning is going to be very standard for the people who have been coming to Canyon Hills for a long time, but for you, it's going to be new. We just finished up a six-week series called *Follow Me*, where we talked about discipleship. What it looks like to be a devoted disciple. We talked about different aspects of that and we had different challenges and things we wanted to do to grow in our faith.

Typically, on a Sunday morning, we just go through a book of the Bible, chapter by chapter, verse by verse, line by line, to look and see what it means and how we can apply it to our lives today. We just have a huge view of Scripture because it reveals God to us. It reveals our need for a Savior as people, how we can be in relationship with God and then how we can live in response to that.

Mark 11 is where we are today, and we've been in Mark for a long time. We just took a break for this particular series. Mark speaks directly to the ministry and mission of Jesus. Jesus' mission was to bring redemption to his people, and the way he went about it (his ministry) was to preach the good news and then to serve.

This morning, we are going to look at a quick story, a small conversation, just a snippet in the ministry of Jesus. Realistically, this exchange is less than two minutes, and yet this gives us a clear picture of Jesus in contrast to the religious leaders of the day and where they placed their trust. The whole conversation is going to be centered on authority. It's used four times in the

passage. When I say *authority*, I mean it's a means of power. It's an excuse to be excused from something or to be exempt from something.

For instance, let me take you to the Potts dinner table. I have four little ones, and so my wife, Ashley, and I are sitting around the table with our kids. One of the kids gets up to go play games or something, and they haven't finished their food. I say, "Where are you going?" and they say, "To go play." Isn't this obvious? I say, "You have not been excused to leave the dinner table. You have not been given permission to get up and go do other things yet. You do not have the authority to go and do that yet."

"Well, how come you get up to go from the table?"

"Because I'm Dad and I don't need to ask your permission to get up from the table."

"But Grandpa says we can get up whenever we want!" Then, the song and dance begins. Everything we do, say, or think relates to this subject. For faith, it has to do with whether we believe Jesus is on the throne or not.

We've heard it all this morning with every service, with baptism: "I want to live for Jesus. I want him to be my everything." There's a big difference between, "I've known Jesus for a long time and he's cool," and, "Jesus is my Lord and I want to live for him." We are all called to know and understand who Jesus is (his power, his authority, and what he has done for us) and then to live in response to that so more people can know him.

That's what we're going to look at in this little conversation, so if you're at Mark 11, would you stand with me for the reading of God's Word? Let's look at this together. We're going to start in verse 27 and we'll read through the end of the chapter.

"And they [Jesus and his disciples] came again to Jerusalem. And as he [Jesus] was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him, and they said to him, 'By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?' Jesus said to them, 'I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me.'

And they discussed it with one another, saying, 'If we say, "From heaven," he will say, "Why then did you not believe him?" But shall we say, "From man"?'—they were afraid of the people, for they all held that John really was a prophet. So they answered Jesus, 'We do not know.' And Jesus said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.'"

Father, would you be with us this morning as we look at your Word? God, we have sung about your greatness. We've prayed and relied on your faithfulness. Now, as we look at your Word, God, I pray that you would just speak to our hearts and show us where we need to change and give us amazing hope in the work of your Son. I ask these things in your name, amen.

Let's just try to take another look at this story. Jesus and his disciples come back again to Jerusalem. This is the third time coming back. So, on Palm Sunday, Jesus comes. He's riding the donkey. People are worshipping him. He goes away, then, and goes to Bethany, and he comes back on Monday. He goes into the temple and he turns over some tables with the moneychangers and things like that. He causes a big ruckus and then goes back to Bethany again.

Here we are, right now, Tuesday morning, and Jesus and his disciples have come back a third time. Yesterday, on Monday, Jesus has caused a bit of commotion. He affected and overthrew some major things. He affected trade, because this affected the way people could buy animals for sacrifice. That's what they were planning to do, and Jesus kind of threw a wrench in that whole thing.

Then, also, Jesus affected just the way things were done. He challenged the status quo because it had been done this way for many, many years. So, it's no surprise that when Jesus comes back to the temple, there are some people ready to say hello. Verse 27: "**And they came again to Jerusalem. And as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him...**"

This isn't going to be a big surprise for many of you, given my physique, but one of the jobs I had in college was to be a bouncer. That's not a joke. That's a legit thing. I was legitimately a bouncer in Madison, Wisconsin. It was in college. It was like my third job to try and make some money for my now-wife's engagement ring.

There are a lot of things you have to keep straight if you're going to be a bouncer, okay? I'll let you into the life, okay? The first thing is you need to be able to recognize when people are making trouble. Secondly, you have to kick them out when they are making trouble. Thirdly, if they try to get back in, you don't let them in. It's a pretty complicated job, but I think maybe if you guys lift a little bit more, you might be able to get there. You might be able to look like me and everything, and it'll be great.

Let's meet the religious bouncers. We have the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. The chief priests are guardians of the law. They hold firm to the law and guard it with their lives. In the Old Testament, they were Levites. When there was a problem, they took care of it, typically with a sword in their hand.

Then, there were the scribes. These are the religious experts. They would teach, interpret, and copy the law. These are the religious nerds, and they had great power and influence within the authority of Judaism, within the church. Then, there were the elders. The elders were more like the overarching leadership. They had political influence. They had influence within society and influence within the religion, so these are some powerful men who are coming to meet Jesus.

Think of it in our context as some high-ranking officials from the FBI, a few members of the Supreme Court, and then some folks from the House and the Senate, all coming to meet Jesus.

They know Jesus, and Jesus knows them. They've talked before, and it's a bit of a standoff in the town square, in the middle of the temple.

They ask Jesus from where he has gained his authority. Just to be clear, these guys had the right and even the responsibility to ask Jesus this question. Their role and responsibility was to guard the people from false teaching. It's the same for our pastors and elders. Our role is to guard, guide, and grow the church. We guard from false teaching. We guide and lead people through example and point them to Jesus, and we help people grow by encouraging them and challenging them to have a deeper, more intimate faith with Christ. In that regard, they're doing their job.

The problem is that they weren't asking Jesus with a motivation for a pure church. They were intimidated. They had been looking for grounds to charge him for some time. They were looking for a way to destroy him. They feared him and they hated him because the crowds loved him. If you looked at the passage, you would notice that it doesn't say, at any point, that they pulled him off to the side to talk privately.

This was a public deal. They are asking him in front of everyone. It was a challenge. It was a trap. They wanted to shame him. They wanted to embarrass him. They wanted to teach him and everyone else around him a lesson. **"By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?"**

"Why do you think you can turn over our tables, our systems, and our rules? Who let you do this? We didn't let you do this. Who do you think you are?" It's really just another day in the life of Jesus and his ministry. Throughout his entire ministry, he gets questioned by both followers and enemies.

Even today, Jesus's authority is challenged. Every word we say, every thought and action, comes down to whether we believe Jesus is God or not. Have you ever questioned the authority of Jesus? I know I have...daily. It happens in the things we say. "It's not fair that this would happen to me!" That's an authority statement. "God, I have a right to know what's going on." That's an authority statement. "We see Jesus as a great teacher." That's an authority statement.

How about in what we do? Unrepentant sin is an authority action. A lack of prayer or a constant worry over things we can't control because we don't trust in God's sovereignty... Those are authority actions. Jesus still gets questioned today. The Pharisees say to him, "What authority do you have to do this?" This is a really good question that they ask him, because they knew Jesus. They knew what they were asking. They knew what they were doing.

Let's just try to remember. It has been a while since we've been in Mark, but let's just try to consider what Jesus has done at this point through the book. At this point in the book of Mark, Jesus has walked on water twice. On two separate occasions, he fed about 9,000 people with 9 loaves of bread and 5 fish. He has healed many sick people. He has brought people back from the dead. He has driven out demons who called him the Son of God while he was doing it.

He called himself the Son of Man, which was a messianic, prophetic title, and he said that in front of the Pharisees. The Pharisees knew him. They wanted him to answer. They had seen his life. They knew his claims and they wanted him to say it clearly, on the record, in front of everyone, because the minute Jesus called himself God the crowd would go nuts. They would start a riot. "Blasphemy! Blasphemy!" They would lock him up and throw away the key.

Yet, by the off chance, if Jesus said, "You know what? I got my authority from this guy over here," well, then that completely nullifies his ministry and claims. Then, they can just take care of him quietly later. **"By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?"** It was a really good question. Let's just look at how Jesus responds in verse 29. **"Jesus said to them, 'I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.'"**

I love that Jesus was prepared and willing to answer the question. What could he have done? He could have said, "You know what? Get off me." He could have ignored them. He could have told them the truth. He could have said, "I am God. You're not. This is my house. It's not yours." He could have sent down fury from heaven. He could have made a scene, but he never did that in his life. He's just the perfect example of humility, meekness, and service. Jesus knew what he was doing. He knew what he was heading for.

Jesus, completely in control of the situation, because he's God, plays along. He says, "I'll ask you one question. If you answer it, I'm more than happy to answer your question." Here's the question. Verse 30: **"Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me."** Does this question seem like a little bit of a left turn? Does it seem to be kind of unrelated to what they're talking about?

I was scratching my head when I looked at it. I was like, "Does this question make sense? Why are you talking about this, Jesus?" I started looking into it a little bit more, and he's referring to John the Baptist. We can actually see John's message and ministry in Mark 1, so why don't you flip over to Mark 1? Let's just look at it together.

John the Baptist is Jesus' cousin. He's a prophet who preached a message of repentance. He preached about Jesus' coming. He would talk about the need for our sins to be forgiven and he performed baptisms as a symbol of sins being forgiven, of repentance. I think Jesus could be referring to that.

Let's look at verse 7. John says, **"After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."** John's mission and purpose was to be a forerunner of Jesus' ministry.

He came and admitted that he was not the Savior. He was a preview of what was to come. So, John's entire mission and focus pointed right to Jesus. Jesus could also have been talking about his own baptism, because he was baptized by John. Look at verse 9.

"In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'"

The heavens open up, a dove flies down, and God speaks. It's this awesome, amazing moment, and Jesus' baptism pointed to his divinity and his mission. So, back in Mark 11, the Pharisees are saying, "Who has given you the authority to do this?" and Jesus asks them a question that points right back to his authority. He gives them his authority within the question.

Basically, he says, "Do you want to know where I got my authority from? Well, where did John get his authority from? He pointed to me. He said I was the Lamb of God. He said I was going to do far greater things than he ever did. If you say his authority was from man, then why did you never correct him? If you say his authority was from God, then that automatically makes my authority from heaven."

So, the Pharisees ask a very good question to Jesus and Jesus asks an even better question to them. Let's look back in Mark 11. What do the Pharisees do when Jesus asks this question? Verse 31:

"And they discussed it with one another, saying, 'If we say, "From heaven," he will say, "Why then did you not believe him?" But shall we say, "From man"?'—they were afraid of the people, for they all held that John really was a prophet. So they answered Jesus, 'We do not know.'"

I'll be the first to admit to you that I know nothing about cars. Zero. If there's a blinking light and I think it's a fuel tank or something, I know what to do like half the time. I know nothing about cars. So, I picture these guys, who probably know many things... They're looking at the hood of a car and someone has said there's something wrong with the engine.

They're kind of looking with no idea what to do and they're like, "So, what are we going to do with this? What are we going to do? I have no idea where to start with this." These are powerful men! These are influential men! These are the religious authority of the day! These are schooled, trained, influential men!

They get around into this holy huddle and they say, "Just give us a second, okay? What are we going to do here? If we say John's ministry is from heaven, then he's going to make fun of us in front of everyone. We can't do that. Yeah, you're right. We can't do that. That's not going to work, but if we say he's from man, we can't say that because they all like the guy. We think he's a hack. Yeah, he's total hack. He's a hack, but everyone loves him over there! I don't know what we're going to do."

They're in this huddle and then someone, I don't know who, comes up with this. Maybe it was the rookie of the bunch. He says, "You know what? I have an idea. We should tell him we don't know."

"What? What are you talking about?"

"We should tell him we don't know. It might throw him off his game."

"I like it!"

"I like it, too! Okay, on the count of three, we'll say it together. One, two, three. We don't know!"

What are they doing? It's so confusing! It doesn't make any sense. It's like they didn't understand the question Jesus replied with. They're so distracted by the crowds they had wrangled together to try and throw Jesus off they don't even get to the heart of the question.

They say, "We don't know." They didn't give their opinion, because they thought it was from man, but they didn't give any answer at all. In front of all these people, in the square, standing face to face with one man, Jesus, they admit their lack of authority. So, Jesus responds and says, **"Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."**

"I do not need to ask your permission to get up from the dinner table, thank you very much." He just owns them. Jesus shows his authority while showing how religion and rules by themselves have no power.

How does this apply to us today? How do we take this little, quick conversation and transfer that into our day-to-to lives? What are we going to do with this this afternoon or this evening? While reading this story, I just saw a lot of warning and conviction through the account of the Pharisees. They challenged Jesus' authority. They questioned his power. They were jealous of his favor and his popularity.

The Pharisees are a picture of the world. They're a picture of that ultimate cultural Christian whom we've been talking about over the last few weeks. You know, they're also a picture of you and me. They're a picture of us when we aren't putting Jesus on the throne. So, here are four quick takeaways from this story that I think apply to us today.

1. *Jesus authority never changes.* This is foundational for us as Christians. Jesus has a power that is both constant and eternal. It's constant because there has never been a time when Jesus hasn't been supreme in his authority. It's eternal because his authority existed before the world was made and it will last forever. Simply put, Jesus has been and will always be God. He was not a man who attained godlike status. He didn't give up his divinity to come to earth to just get it back again later. He never earned being God because he has always been God.

John says it like this. **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God."** Then, in verse 14, he says, **"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."** That's talking about Jesus.

In Hebrews 13, it says, "**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.**" Jesus doesn't have to prove himself to you and me. He's perfect. He's God. He is our supreme eternal King. He's on the throne in heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father. His authority never changes.

2. *Trust Jesus over systems of achievement.* The Pharisees ask him and challenge him, "Who let him do these things?" to teach and challenge their authority. They ask him that question because they didn't like his credentials. They didn't view John's ministry as legitimate. They thought he was a fake. They didn't view Jesus' ministry as legitimate. They thought he was a false teacher. The only thing that was legitimate about him was a threat, or so they thought.

The Pharisees put their faith in their religion and their rules. Their view of greatness and of power had to do with what you had accomplished. They had gone to school. They had kept all the rules. They even made extra rules, and the Pharisees argued with Jesus throughout his ministry: "You can't do this because it's messing with our rules." Eventually, they just kill him for it. It's easy for us to put our faith in what we accomplish.

We have some amazingly talented people sitting in this room. You could poke your neighbor and say, "He's talking about me." We have some resourceful people, talented people, smart people, and people who have been blessed in their lives, very fortunate, and that's awesome, but don't put your faith in it.

We trust in money. We think enough cash will give us value. We trust in our jobs and assume our position will put us in a spot of power. We trust in our education, thinking our hard work and perseverance will win the day. Is that really what we need? Is it really all about money, jobs, and education? Those are good things, but are those ultimate things? If you had none of that stuff but had Jesus, would that be enough for you? If you had all of that stuff but didn't have Jesus, would that be okay?

Jesus is the greatest gift we could ever imagine. All of our hope is found in him. He's our Redeemer. He said it himself in John 14. He says, "**I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**" Our identity as people only comes through the redemption of Jesus. It's not in our works; it's only in Christ that we can be saved to eternal life.

I love how Paul Tripp puts it. He says, "We must not offer people a system of redemption, a set of insights and principles. We offer people a Redeemer." Put your faith and trust in Jesus. The power is in his work. Don't put yourself on the throne. Put him on the throne.

3. *Worship Jesus over people's opinions.* The Pharisees didn't answer Jesus. They wouldn't answer Jesus because they feared the opinion of other people. They were worried about the crowds. They challenged Jesus and killed Jesus because they were jealous of how people liked Jesus.

I think you and I fall into this trap. I think you and I will tend to value other people higher than Jesus. The phenomenal athlete, the amazing singer, the innovative leader, the girl you have a crush on, the boss who writes your checks, your kids... Without Jesus on the throne, you and I find our worth in what other people think about us. So, body image starts to become our worship. Social media becomes our community. Self-motivation becomes our Scripture.

People are great, but people can't save you. We need a better champion than that. We need Jesus. Jesus is our champion. In Hebrews 1, it says, "**He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.**" When God set forth the plan of redemption, when he said, "This is how I'm going to save my people and bring them back to myself," he didn't bring just anyone. He sent his Son. No one else could do it. No one else was perfect. It had to be Jesus. It had to be the exact imprint, the perfect match.

Pastor Steve can't save you. Your parents' faith can't save you. Your semi-acquaintance Facebook friends can't save you. God sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, God himself, to come for the salvation of the world, so don't put your faith in human opinion. It's just always going to be changing. It's nebulous and compromising. The rules are adjusting all the time. What was fine 20 years ago is now terrible, and what was terrible 20 years ago is now celebrated, and it'll switch back again in 20 years. Put your trust in Jesus, your secure, strong, true champion. Don't put any person or anything on the throne. It's his throne.

4. *We all need to get a bigger view of Jesus.* I think this last point is the most important point. This just hit me so deep in my heart when I was looking at this and thinking through this. I didn't even like writing it down. If we think about it, every single one of us has a view of Jesus that is woefully inadequate. The Pharisees challenged Jesus because their view of him was tiny. They go up in front of him with a bunch of crowds and they challenge him to this face with blatant disrespect because they viewed him as small.

Every single person in here needs a bigger view of Jesus. I know there are some of you here who are still looking and trying to figure out what a relationship with Jesus looks like. You're trying to figure out what that might be and what that might look like for you in your life. I just want to say thank you so much for coming. It's just a joy to worship with you and to tell you about our Savior.

There are many of you who are here who have grown up in a lineage of Christians. Your parents, grandparent, and great-grandparents have been faithful Christians for some time. The problem is you just haven't owned it yourself yet. Just because you go to church every Sunday, it doesn't mean you have a legitimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

There are many people here who have surrendered their hearts to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and you are living for him. You have lived faithfully for him for years. Praise God for that, but hear me for everyone when I say this. Regardless of your relationship with him to this point, Jesus is far greater than what you think of him right now. He is so much more awesome, so much more powerful, so much stronger, and so much more beautiful and wonderful.

He told his friends, the disciples, at the end of his earthly ministry, in Matthew 28, "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.**" All of it. "I have it all." We need to get a bigger view of Jesus. Why is that important? It's because of what he tells us to do right after that. He says,

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

When we have a big view of Jesus, we get to see people come to faith in him. Jesus is powerful, awesome in power, and he came to live, to die, and then to live again so you and I could have life and that the people around you could know him too. We are called to know and understand who Jesus is, what he has done for us in his awesome power, and then live in response to that so other people would be hungry for that.

Do you believe Jesus is big, awesome, and powerful? Do you live in a way that shows you believe that? What would it look like to the people who are around you who don't know Jesus yet if your view of Jesus got bigger every day? What would change? When we have a big view of Jesus and we trust him over our achievements, we show the world the offer to be able to celebrate and rest in the grace of God by the work of Christ.

When our view of Jesus is big (and it's bigger than the people who are around us and their opinions of us), we get to show them someone whose opinion matters and someone who's going to love them far greater than we ever could. Jesus is God. He is great. We are called to worship him above everything else. Put him back on the throne. Put him on the throne for the first time. Put him on the throne today and see what he does with your life. See the fruit that could come from that.

Before we pray, with every head bowed and eyes closed, I just want to invite you, if you are here and you don't have a saving relationship with Jesus, to start that today. What I mean by saving relationship with Jesus is that you might have known about him. You might have known facts about him, but you haven't surrendered your heart to him as Lord and Savior.

You have an opportunity to do that today, to change your eternity, to have a forever relationship with him where you can live with him and be looking forward to an everlasting relationship with him. I hope you will do that. There are going to be people up front who would love to pray with you. They would be honored to do that with you. I just want to invite you to do that today. You can change your eternity today, but you can only change it in Christ.

God, we come before you, just so thankful for what you've done for us. God, we just celebrate your grace and the work your Son Jesus did for us on the cross with his life, death, and resurrection. Lord, we just confess that our view of him needs to get a whole lot bigger.

God, if there are things in our lives where we are not living in response to how you are, Lord and King, show us. Help us change. Help us live for you. God, help us to have a big view of you in everything we do so other people can see it and can see the hope we have in you and your Son. Thank you for all you've done for us. We love you, Lord. In your name, amen.

If you have something big you need prayer for, again, we have people up here who would love to pray with you. If you want to start a relationship with Jesus, come up and let us celebrate that with you. Let us talk with you about that. We would love to do that.

Have a great week, and we'll see you guys next Sunday.