

Sunday, August 25, 2024 | Holy Week

Week 2 | Luke 20:1-18 | "Lunatic, Liar, or Lord"

Last week, we embarked on a profound journey with a new series: Holy Week. This series, as the name suggests, delves into the pivotal week leading up to the cross and even extends a bit beyond (Lu. 19:28-24:53). Holy Week, a monumental event that altered the course of human history, holds a special place in our faith. Despite our unworthiness, every believer of every age can be sanctified by the authority of the Holy One of God, all because of Holy Week.

In the first sermon of the series, we studied the events that took place on Palm Sunday. On that day, Jesus rode a donkey towards Jerusalem, wept outside the city, and, entering the Temple, disrupted the moneychanger's business therein. These three scenes show Jesus assuming three important OT offices: the King, the Prophet, and the Priest. The Son of God was the Gentle King on a campaign of peace. But because the Jews rejected their messianic king, the Son of Man was also the Weeping Prophet, bemoaning how his people had invited judgment on themselves. After all, there was no greater High Priest than Jesus Christ. He knew that Zion was sick, yet they would not change. And while the Israelites might still be looking for the Messiah, all true children of God know that **there is no king, prophet, or priest but Jesus.**

READ: Luke 20:1-18 (ESV)

¹ One day, as Jesus was **teaching the people** in the temple and **preaching the gospel**, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up ² and said to him, "Tell us by **what authority** you do these things, or **who** it is that **gave** you this **authority**." ³ He answered them, "I also will ask you a question. Now tell me, ⁴ was the baptism of John from **heaven** or from **man**?" ⁵ And they discussed it with one another, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why did you not **believe** him?' ⁶ But if we say, 'From man,' all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a **prophet**." ⁷ So they answered that they did not know where it came from. ⁸ And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

⁹ And he began to tell the people this **parable**: "A man planted **a vineyard** and let it out to **tenants** and went into another country for a long while. ¹⁰ When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, so that they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants **beat him** and sent him away empty-handed. ¹¹ And he sent another servant. But they also **beat** and **treated him shamefully**, and sent him away

empty-handed. ¹² And he sent yet a third. This one also they **wounded** and cast out. ¹³ Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my **beloved son**; perhaps they will respect him.' ¹⁴ But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours.' ¹⁵ And they **threw him out** of the vineyard and **killed** him.

What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? ¹⁶ He will come and **destroy** those tenants and **give** the vineyard to **others**." When they heard this, they said, "Surely not!" ¹⁷ But he **looked directly at them** and said, "What then is this that is written: "'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone'? ¹⁸ Everyone who falls on that stone will be **broken** to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will **crush** him."

In his book *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis said,

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. . . . Now it seems to me obvious that He was neither a lunatic nor a fiend: and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God.

What do you think? Is Jesus a lunatic, a liar, or a Lord? As we'll see in today's passage, the consequences will be disastrous if you recognize him as anything but your Lord.

In this passage, there are **three** important comparisons:

i. Vs. 1-8 – As heaven gave John **baptism**, so God gave Jesus **authority**.

"**chief priests and the scribes with the elders**" were the Sanhedrin, the ruling class in Jerusalem.

If one knows the source of John's baptism, one will know, ipso facto, the source of Jesus' authority. After all, the Baptizer recognized Jesus' superiority:

READ: Luke 3:21-22 (ESV)

²¹ Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my **beloved Son**; with you I am well pleased."

Thus, by answering their question with a question, Jesus was not being evasive. His question was more an answer than an inquiry. By bringing up the Baptizer, Jesus showed that their open rejection of Jesus is rooted in their secret rejection of John. Had they truly thought John was from heaven, they would've acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God.

"Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things." If the Sanhedrin refused to answer a simple question about the nature of John's baptism, they could not engage in a good-faith discussion about the nature of Jesus' authority. The religious authorities and Jesus were at an impasse; neither one was willing to relinquish ground.

ii. Vs. 9-15a – As the vineyard's owner sent servants and his son to the vinedressers, **God sent prophets and Jesus Christ to Israel.**

Hiring tenant farmers to work a vineyard was common in the first century. Jesus uses this image to give a broad overview of Israel's history. In fact, a vineyard is a very Jewish image. Typically, it represented Israel (cf. Isa. 5; Jer. 5:10; 6:9); though, as we'll see, in this case, the tenants were Israel, and the vineyard is, more broadly speaking, "the kingdom of God" (cf. Matt. 21:43).

Notice how the treatment of the servants gets progressively worse. The tenants "beat" the first servant and send "him away empty-handed." Like before, the tenants "beat" the second servant, but this time, they also treat "him shamefully" before sending "him away empty-handed." When a third servant is sent to the tenants, they go even further and "wound" before they eventually "cast [him] out."

The question, "What shall I do?" Is meant to draw in Jesus' audience. How would they react, given the consistent hostility? In all likelihood, they would've retaliated and violently so. Instead, Jesus says that the owner of the vineyard decides to "send [his] beloved son," thinking that "perhaps [the tenants] will respect him." At this point, Jesus has left behind Jewish history and is speaking about the present.

Unsurprisingly, the tenants kill their boss' "beloved Son." Likewise, Israel will crucify Jesus Christ.

iii. Vs. 15b-18 - As the vineyard's owner destroyed the vinedresser, giving the vineyard to others, **God demolished Israel, giving the Kingdom to believers.**

Once again, the question, “[What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them,](#)” is meant to draw in his audience. Four times, the Owner of the vineyard has parleyed for peace, and each time, the vinedressers refused, going so far as to kill the owner's son. The time for peace talks is over. Undoubtedly, the Owner “[will come and **destroy** those tenants and **give** the vineyard to **others.**”](#)”

The term “[others](#)” (vs. 16) is a reference to believers (Jews and Gentiles alike). This is not to say that the church **replaces** Israel. At some point in the future, once the “[full number of the Gentiles has come in](#)” (cf. Rom 11:25), Israel will be grafted into the vine once more. Jesus’ point is that anyone who rejects him will forfeit their place in God’s kingdom. The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 is evidence that Israel's rejection of Jesus had disastrous consequences.

Jesus' parables were often misunderstood. But that is not the case here. Once Jesus' audience heard that vinedressers—Israel—would be destroyed and the vineyard given to "others," they responded in outright denial: “[Surely not!](#)” This is as strong a “no” as one could give. The thought was unthinkable.

Jesus “[looked directly at them](#) and said, “[What then is this that is written: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone’? Everyone who falls on that stone will be **broken** to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will **crush** him.”](#)”

John the Baptist warned Israel not to say, “[We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire](#)” (Lu. 3:8-9). Just as Israel would be felled like a fruitless tree, Israel will be “[broken to pieces](#)” and “[crush\[ed\]](#).” They've rejected the cornerstone that is Jesus Christ. The same stone they stumble over today will break them later and ultimately smash all who reject him on that last day. The Jew’s special designation as God’s chosen people does not make them immune to punishment.

So, what’s the takeaway?

All who **accept** the Lordship of Christ will be **built up**, but all who **deny** it will be **laid low**.

READ: 1 Peter 2:4-8 (ESV)

⁴ As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵ you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone

chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”⁷ So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”⁸ and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

Video Description:

Holy Week | Week 2 | “Lunatic, Liar, or Lord” (Luke 20:1-18)

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

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