Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Responsibilities of the Church: Exercising Authority, Part 1
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 90-145

As we come to the word of God this morning in limited time we're continuing our series on the anatomy of the church. And this is kind of an open-ended series just scooping everything that's on my heart with regard to the church. After all these years of ministering it's hard to imagine this is year 28. I don't feel any older until I look in a mirror, and then it all comes crashing down, right? But these has been great years and the Lord has taught me many thing through these years from the study of the word through all these many many years through ministry and through working with gifted men and women and being a part of the very fellowship of this wonderful congregation.

The Lord has enabled me to understand his word and to refine the Scripture to the place where I feel at this particular point we can address these issues and lay down a solid foundation of what the Bible has to say about the church and the foundation to which we are committed in the very life of our church as well and have been through the years. So this has been a very special special time for me and for all of us as a church to look at some of these things that are so foundational and so precious to us and to the Lord who gave them to us.

Now just for those of you who haven't been here we've been talking about the church in the body analogy. The New Testament identifies the church as a body, and sort of stretching that metaphor a little bit. We talked about the skeleton, or the foundation of the body, which is certain key doctrinal matters. Then we talked about the internal systems of the body, that carry the life and those are spiritual attitudes like faith, love, and obedience and forgiveness, and humility and things like that.

And now we're talking about the function, the muscles of the body, that, which puts the body into motion, into action. And we discussed first of all the function of fellowship, which is sort of the overarching function. The church is a fellowship of people with common spiritual life, commonly sharing the life of Christ in them, and they are brought together for the purpose of mutual stimulation to righteousness and mutual ministry. And we are a fellowship. All of us have a role to play as we come together for one another's strength and edification. And so we discussed the function of fellowship and covered it a couple of weeks ago.

Then in our last discussion we went to a second function of the church and that is preaching and teaching. In the midst of the fellowship certain people are especially gifted for preaching and teaching, though all Christians have the responsibility to proclaim the gospel and teach the truth to others. Preaching and teaching is an absolutely essential component of the life of the church because

it's by preaching and teaching that the divine message of the word of God is passed on. God has designed by preaching and teaching to proclaim the gospel, he has designed to save souls by the foolishness of preaching and to grow Christians by the preaching of the word, which reproves, rebukes, resorts, and instructs the word, which is able to make the man of God complete. So preaching and teaching is a crucial function of the church and we discussed that last time.

I want to extend that a little bit and to really sort of talk about a subject that is related to that, but really needs to be addressed singularly. And that is that the church functions in the world as the divine authority, as the divine authority. We are in the world functioning as the authority. We have a lot of authorities in our society, governmentally, all the way down to local government police and all of that. We have authorities in school and we have authorities on the job. And in various functions of social life there are people who are in charge of this and that and therefore, are over us and we are responsible to them.

But there is one singular authority in the world, which stands alone as the dispenser of divine truth and the divine will of the eternal God and that is the church of Jesus Christ. As you remember in the Old Testament Israel was given the responsibility to be the conduit of divine truth to the world, remember when God chose Israel he chose them for the purpose of being a witness nation, not to be an end, but a means to an end of taking the message of the true and living God to the whole world. Israel being unfaithful was set aside and the Lord has chosen a new nation, as it were, made up of Jew and Gentile and the nation of Israel.

Romans 9 says, "To whom belong the adoption the sons, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of the temple, the promises, whose are the Fathers and from whom is Christ according to the flesh, Israel who once had all those privileges and to pass them on to the world, has been temporarily set aside. The church has been carved out, made of Jew and Gentile, and we are God's witness people in the world. Across the face of the earth the church is the authoritative voice of God. And so we have to understand that the church needs to speak authoritatively.

I want to talk about that, the church functioning as an authority in the world. For a passage at which we can launch our discussion turn to Titus Chapter 2, Titus Chapter 2. And I want to address your attention just to one verse in specific here that will set a context in the book and that's verse 15, the last verse of Chapter 2, Titus 2:15.

Now remember that Paul is writing to Titus. Titus is on the island of Crete. We don't know how many churches were established on Crete, but there were a hundred different towns on the island and so there was a possibility for a number of churches. Titus was given the responsibility under the apostolic leading of Paul to go to Crete and to strengthen the churches. To set them in order, to preach to them, to teach them and to help them establish elders, pastors. That was his job. He was to go and evangelize, and strengthen churches, and establish leaders. He would have the responsibility

of both preaching the gospel and instructing the saints. In verse 15 he is told, "These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you." The word authority there is the key word. He says Titus, you go there and you preach and you teach and you do it with authority.

The preacher/teacher is not primarily a story teller, not primarily explaining things or sharing things or commenting on issues or giving insights into life or counseling this and that dilemma in people's minds, although all that may in some way fit into what he does. But primarily the preacher and the teacher commands. Let me show you why. The word authority is epetagae, in the Greek from the Greek verb epetaso, which means to command. Every other time in the New Testament that that word appears it is translated command or commandment. And it tells us that preaching and teaching is a commanding duty. We speak as those who command. Preach the word he says to Timothy in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, resort, and then he went on to say the time will come when they won't want to hear it, all the more reason to speak it boldly.

In I Timothy 4, Paul says to Timothy, "Command and teach these things." And so we are involved in this proclamation of divine truth in a commanding way. We have every right to command sinners to repent and believe, to command them to confess Jesus as Lord, to command them to turn from their sins and embrace salvation in Christ. We have the responsibility to command believers to obey God, to learn his will, to study the Scripture, to pray, to witness, to do all those things that the Scripture lays out. We basically bring the authority of the word of God.

Now to show you where this authority comes from and how important it is, let's go back to the gospels for a moment by way of introduction and remind our selves of the first sermon that Jesus preached, the great Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew 5 to 7. This sermon initiated a collision of authorities. There was a reigning authority in Israel, namely the scribes and the Pharisees, the High Priest on down who were part of the Sadducee group. There was a very well defined hierarchy there. They were in the religious leadership and authority of the nation.

In the Sermon on the Mount, which is the first of Jesus' sermons recorded in the New Testament, he basically dismantles their false religious system. He attacks their theology, he attacks their interpretation of the Old Testament, he attacks their superficiality, he attacks their hypocritical praying, he attacks the phoniness in their giving, he attacks their pride. He basically dismantles the entire religious system and consequently it is an assault on the reigning authorities who have determined that this is in fact the divinely required and prescribed religious format. Jesus then launched his ministry in conflict bringing his own authority against the current authority of his time.

Having preached that great sermon at the end, it says in verse 28, "The result was that when Jesus had finished these words the multitudes were amazed at his teaching." Why? "For he was teaching them as one having authority." Nobody ever spoke authoritatively unless he quoted a rabbi and nobody ever spoke authoritatively unless he spoke in unison with the current theological trend or the

viewpoint of the more dominant rabbi's. Nobody just stood up and took issue with the entire religious establishment and its entire theology and dismantled it authoritatively, but that's what Jesus did. He spoke in a commanding way as one who had authority.

Mark points out the very same thing in Mark 1:21. "He went into Capernaum and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and began to teach." And now he's in the synagogue and earlier in Matthew's gospel when they expressed that he had spoken with authority was on the side of the mountain giving that sermon, but here he's in the synagogue and he begins to teach and they're amazed at his teaching there for he is teaching them as one having authority and not as the scribes. Here is the pattern being established. Wherever he goes, at whatever point he speaks authoritatively, that is, he speaks with precision, he speaks with clarity and he speaks with command. This is truth and this is how you must respond.

In Luke's gospel Chapter 4, we read in verse 36, "Amazement came upon them all and they began discussing with one another" this time he's preaching at Nazareth, "What is this message? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits and they come out." Not only was his message authoritative but he had this power over the realm of darkness.

In John's gospel Chapter 7:46 you remember that some officers were sent to seize Jesus and the Pharisees said to them, "Why didn't you bring him?" They came back empty handed. In verse 46, the officers answered, "Never did a man speak the way this man speaks." Now these men were soldiers. They were used to taking orders. They were under orders. They knew that they needed to do what they were told by the Pharisees. These were the temple police. They were sent to seize Jesus and when they got there there was one who had greater authority than their officiating authorities had. There was on who commanded them and they turned on their heels and left empty handed. Jesus had a bearing and a word of authority that was beyond anything they had ever experienced.

In Mark's gospel Chapter 11:28, they said to him, "What is the source of your authority?" Where did you get your authority? Could it have been 2,000 years of Jewish tradition and you're just sort of parking on the pedestal of tradition? Or is it the fact that you are lining up with the current reigning theology of the dominating school of Rabbi's or was his authority because it was really a viewpoint in line with the current popular trend, was he taking a poll of what was the dominate idea of the time and just identifying with that?

Was his authority based on an office that he held, some official title that he bore, or some education or training that he had gone through? Maybe it was his looks. Maybe he had such an imposing person or his style, or his or voice, or his oratory, his communicating skill. What was his authority? Why did they all have the same reaction?

Well look at John 7 and we'll find out. Verse 14, it was now the midst of the feast and Jesus went up into the temple and began to teach. The Jews therefore were marveling, saying, "how has this man become learned, never having been educated?" They could recognize that he was erudite; they could recognize that he was brilliant. No human mind in all of human history could match his untouched by sin and completely and perfectly joined to deity. He had a mind the likes of which has never otherwise existed.

And they recognized his mental powers, they recognized his erudition, they recognized his brilliance. They couldn't figure out how he knew so much when he was just a hayseed from up on Galilee who had never been through the proper rabbinical training schools. Where did he get this learning? Where did he get this power, this authority? Verse 16, "He answered them, and said, 'My teaching is not mine.'" He says, "This authority is such because I've borrowed my teaching from someone else. It is his who sent me." In other words he is simply saying I have authority because I speak the word of God.

In verse 18, he says, "He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory." When you talk about yourself you seek your own glory. When you preach about yourself you seek your own glory. "But he who is seeking the glory of the one who sent him, he is true, and there is no unrighteousness in him." A very simple verse but a profound one. When you hear a preacher or a teacher and they give you the word of God, they're seeking the glory of God. You hear a preacher or a teacher and they tell you what they think, they're seeking their own glory and there's no truth in them.

Further down in this gospel in Chapter 8 the issue comes up again. And Jesus in verse 28 says, "When you life up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He and I do nothing on my own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught me." Jesus had delegated authority. He had authority because he spoke the word of God. That's clear! Verse 38, "I speak the things which I have seen with my Father." Verse 40, "But as it is you are seeking to kill me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God." Where did Jesus get his authority? He got is because he spoke the word of God with clarity, with conviction, with power, with precision.

Turn to John 12:49 and 50, at the end of the chapter. Again the issue is up for discussion and he says in verse 49, "I did not speak on my own initiative." I don't make up these messages, "but the Father himself who sent me has given me commandment what to say and what to speak and I know that his commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told me." Where did Jesus get his authority? He spoke the word of God.

If Paul said to Titus, "Speak these things with all authority," what was he telling him to do? He's telling him to do the very same thing he told Timothy to do, preach the word. You see the preacher's authority comes only when he speaks the word of God. It's all the authority he has.

I don't have any authority but that. I don't have any authority connected to my office as a pastor/teacher. I don't have any authority connected to my ordination because I passed inspection and a large group of pastors got together and checked me out and quizzed me and questioned me and validated me. That doesn't give me any authority. I don't have any authority because I'm educated, or because I've read and studied through the years, or because my brain still functions and maybe I see things clearly and have some experience. I don't have any authority because of that. I don't have any authority because I have the opportunity to be a part of the elders of Grace Church and give some leadership to that group of men or because I have oversight of a seminary or a college or any of that. The only time ever in my entire life I have authority is when I open my mouth and the word of God comes out. That is the only authority I have and that's true for all preachers and teachers.

When we preach the word we have authority and it is to be commanded. What Paul charged Titus to do is what everybody has to do who preaches and teaches: speak with authority. Speak with authority. You are commanding people, to understand, to believe and to obey, really those three things. That sums it up. You want them to understand.

You're saying to them, listen and get this. Then you're saying believe and be convinced of this, and then you're saying submit and obey this. That's really the process.

And this is all authority, go back to Titus, this is all authority, that is to say it is comprehensive and unassailable. You really can't fight back when the word of God is preached and taught. This authority then is all authority, comprehensive and unassailable. Now let's look at this verse for a minute and we'll use this as a starting point and I didn't get anywhere near where I wanted to in the first service so I'll have to kind of do the same here and we're going to go after it again tonight and what is really very very crucial as crucial as anything that I could say to you in this area of preaching is what I'm going to say tonight. But let's look at this one verse and break it into three points.

Number one is the content. Here it simply says, "These things speak, and exhort, and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you." And we have to immediately ask the question what are these things? Well, of course, it takes us back to what has been being discussed and we go all the way back. Let's go back to verse 1 of Chapter 2 and that'll answer our question. It says in verse 1, "As for you speak the things which are fitting for sound teaching, healthy teaching, wholesome teaching, sound doctrine." And then he digs into some of those things flowing down through the text comes to verse 15 and says, "These things." What are they? Everything that fits sound teaching, everything that God has commanded, everything that fits sound doctrine. Now let me help you to interpret that one a step further.

In II Timothy Chapter 3, "All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for doctrine, or teaching." So he says in verse 1 or Titus 2, "Preach the things of sound doctrine." Paul says, "All Scripture is profitable for doctrine," so, therefore we conclude we are to preach Scripture. And that's exactly what Paul said to Timothy when he said, "Preach the word." All the things revealed in Scripture. That's why we have an expository ministry going through the word of God, explaining its great realities. It is the word of God that must be preached because the word alone carries divine authority.

In I Timothy 4:6, Paul says to Timothy, "You are to be constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine." Why? Because over in verse 10 you have to command and teach these things. There's that these things again. These are the things that you must command.

I Timothy 5:7, Command these things. He says that same phrase again. Command these things. In Chapter 6:2 at the end of the verse, "teach and preach these," you can fill in the blank, "these things" these things, which become sound doctrine, these things, which are healthy teaching, these things which are authoritative because they come out of the Scripture. Beloved the preacher's message has already been determined. It's not my job to invent the message. It's my job to communicate it.

This is so basic, so essential, and yet here we are on a day-to-day when expository preaching is not popular, in fact well known professors who've taught it for years are saying we need to set expository preaching completely aside and forget about it, it doesn't suit the time in which we live, we need to turn to story telling, etc. etc. We need to devise ministries that will garner accolades from the world and make them like us and ministries that will tickle the ears of people in the church and cause them to be happy because they're hearing what they want to hear and not what confronts their life.

That's the trend today and when you step into that and teach the word of God, the systematically and authoritatively and doctrinally, and you bring it to bear upon the hearts of people you are a threat. They view you as a problem, divisive, as you know. That's the sad sad condition of the church.

Church marketing experts are saying people don't want to hear Bible exposition; they don't want to hear the word of God. Well, all the more reason to preach it. So they want to be entertained. That doesn't mean it justifies the doing of it. Tragically tragically people are abandoning the preaching of the word of God and they're doing it, they say, to curry favor with their people. You hear some people say, "Well you know he doesn't really preach doctrine and he doesn't really have a lot of strong convictions about theology and all of that, but he's very loving." May I suggest to you that that might not be the case? Sentimental maybe, but loves speaks truth because love desires above everything to prevent its people from falling into deception and sin and weakness and divine chastening.

If I really love my congregation I want to teach them the truth with all the power I have so they can find the path of blessing and avoid the path of deception and chastening, right? So you don't equate sentimental love with not having any convictions and call that loving your people. If you love your

people you tell them the truth so they can walk in obedience and be blessed. Preaching the word is all there is for us. That's it! I mean that is my passion.

So the content is set. Go back to Titus 2 the content is set. Let's look at the method. This is very practical, very helpful. How do we go about doing this? Three verbs are used: speak, exhort and reprove. Laleo para coleo and lelinko. Three verbs. They have unique meanings. The first one to speak, carries the idea of saying something so that it is heard. And we can add to that, so that it is heard with understanding. Take sound doctrine and say it so people hear it implying with understanding. That is the first task of the preacher or teacher. You say something so that people hear it and understand it. I want to get your attention, I want you to listen and I want you to understand. So you work to make it clear and you work to draw a person into want to hear it. That's the first thing. Speak it he says, speak it so they can hear it and understand it.

Second word: exhort. Now this is more than proclamation. This is exhortation. This goes beyond that and what you're trying to do here is get people not to just to hear and understand but to believe that it's true and to put it into their convictions. And that too is a function of preaching and teaching. How do you do that? Well you don't do it by just yelling louder. You do it by making the point more compelling, by showing the reasonableness of it, by showing the biblical character of it by using comparative passages, by under girding it with illustrations from the word of God and perhaps from life itself, you want to bring the person from saying I hear you and I understand what you're saying to saying, you know what? That's true and I believe it, right? And now it's a conviction because you've shown me from the word of God. I could stand up here week after week, do all of my study and tell you what was true, but some of you might not believe it. So I do the best I can to show you from the word of God why it is true, so that it goes beyond you hearing and understanding to you saying that's true, I see it, that's a part of my faith, my convictions. That's the exhortation part. Pressing it.

And then there's the third verb: reprove. And what that basically does is demand that you go one more step. You hear it so that it is understood, you believe it so that it's become a conviction, now submit to it so it shows up in obedience. Now you're talking about obeying and submitting. This is where you have to force the issue and talk about how God blesses this kind of obedience and how this great truth will enrich your life and etc. etc. and you press the issue so that an individual will come from hearing to believing to obeying because he or she sees the benefit of that obedience.

Now that's the method and that's what the preacher does and that's what a teacher does. You get passionate about it, but you also have to be biblical, you have to use your mind, you have to show people that it's reasonable to believe this and that you're compelled to believe it from what the word of God clearly says and then you're to bind it upon their conscience so that they are forced to obey.

Now that takes us to the third point, which is the force. The content, the word of God; the method, preaching and teaching so people hear, believe and obey and the force with which you do that; it

says, "with all authority let no one disregard you."

You know what this anticipates? This anticipates resistance, doesn't it? Doesn't it anticipate that somebody's going to try to disregard you? Of course! It anticipates conflict. Wherever there is the proclamation of biblical truth there will be conflict. I don't care whether you're presenting the gospel to an unbeliever or whether you're presenting the message of sanctification to a Christian who is resisting it in sin. There is conflict.

Dick Mayhue and I were in Cleveland a couple of days ago and we were walking down the street just taking a little walk in the cold air before a meeting and preaching that night and we went into a little shop there just to warm a little bit and there was a Muslim guy there who was the owner of this place. And you know we're always looking for a mission field anyplace and so we started to talk to him about Christ and he was very cordial because obviously he'd like to sell us his stuff, you know.

So we were cordial and we talked about Christ and asked him if he was a Muslim and I said, "You know I'd like to know if you believe in heaven and hell." "Yes, yes." I said, "I'd like to know if you're going to get to heaven?" He said, "I hope to get there." I said, "Well aren't you sure?" He said, "Well it's like this, at the end you know, there's this big scale and all the good stuff is over here and the bad stuff is here and I think mine's okay." I said, "But you don't know that?" I said, "That's a tough way to live." I said, "Would you like to have all your sins forgiven immediately forever?" "Oh," he said, "That can't happen." I said, "Yes it can," and I went into the gospel and the wall went up just immediately this wall went up. And he said, "I'm a Muslim all my life," and he goes into this tirade about this and then he said, "Besides, that's not fair. I don't rob a bank and I don't commit adultery and I don't do this and I don't do this and I don't do that and then some guy does that all his life and he just gets forgiven. That's not fair." I said, "You're right. Fair isn't the deal. Are you sure you want fair?" He just got quiet, you know. His computer was running back over, but there was this instant resistance.

So we went the rest of our little walk for an hour and then came back to see if the truth had percolated because the last thing I said to him when I left, I said, "just remember that if ever you are so overwhelmed with your sin and the fear of future judgment and you want total forgiveness, fall on your knees and ask God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to forgive your sins and he'll grant you that forgiveness. I just want to leave you with that thought in case you ever need it."

So we came back about an hour later. This guy was totally different. He wanted to talk some more about that. And then we talked some more and now he's in trouble because there were three of us, Brad Witheral was with us and we said now you're on a very significant prayer list, Mike, so you may be in some spiritual trouble because we're going to pray for you. It's normal for people who have a system of religion to react against the truth, but you don't equivocate on the truth, right? You don't say to the guy, you know Muslims are going to be in heaven too. We're all going the same way. You say well that's more loving. No it's not. That's just lying. You just don't let anybody off the hook and when

they want to argue with you you don't let them off the hook.

See you preach with authority. You speak the word that must be spoken and let God the Holy Spirit do the work. There will be conflict. "Let no one disregard you," that Greek word pariferneo. Pari means to go around. It's a circumference, a perimeter and don't let anybody evade this. Hit that authority in there from the word of God. Don't let anybody get around it, justify, rationalize, evade, avoid. Hold their feet to the truth. Make sure no one disregards the implications of Scripture.

And beloved, we are called to preach the word of God with all authority and not let anybody evade its implications. I've said that through the years. I've taught that to young men at the seminary. The idea of preaching is that when you're done people are literally pinned to the back of their seat with the realization I know what he said, I know it's true, I understand its implications and I either will or will not do it. That's what we're after.

Now when Jesus came on the scene, he's our model, he entered into instant conflict, instant conflict with the religious establishment and didn't change anything. The conflict was so furious that from the time he launched his ministry they wanted him dead, right? Even up in Galilee they tried to throw him of a cliff. Finally they got their way and they had him executed and he was executed really because he was in complete conflict with the existing religious establishment. That's what truth does. His whole ministry was a conflict over authority. It was all about are the people going to follow Jesus or are they going to follow us? The rulers were saying, "We're losing them." They were the incumbent presiding authorities with all that that word implies with power and privilege and control and influence.

And Jesus just from the very first Sermon on the Mount just dismantled that authority. Called them hypocrites, called them blind leaders of the blind leading everybody into the ditch, called them wicked, adulterous, teachers of doctrine, which had evil influence like leaven, and all the while while he was rejecting their authority he was affirming his own. He taught as one having authority. He astonished those people that we read about in the synagogue in Capernaum with the authoritative teaching that he gave.

He claimed to have authority over the earth in Mark Chapter 2. Satan got him up into a high mountain and promised he would give him authority. What did he need to have authority from Satan for? He already had authority and in Matthew 28:18 he said, "All authority is giving unto me in heaven and earth." He had authority over disease, death, demons, angels. He had authority to lay down his life and take it back again. Every time he opened his mouth God's word came forth authoritatively. You see he acted in conflict with human systems, religious and secular.

The Jewish leaders wanted him dead because they were in a battle for who was going to be in charge. And it really reached its fever in the Passion Week, the last week of our Lord's life on Wednesday. Go to Matthew Chapter 21, and you will know why it was that by Friday they had him

nailed to a cross. Verse 23, "And when he had come into the temple, and the place was just jammed with people, because it was Passover, and all the religious leaders were there, the chief priests and elders of the people, that would be everybody. That would include the High Priest, the captain of the temple who was head of the temple police, who had oversight over everything that was going on there from a security standpoint, had the power to arrest people, that would include the weekly priests whom there were 24 orders of them, the daily priests 156 of them, the overseer priests who headed up things and had the keys to unlock everything and guide the operations, and then there were the treasurers who were in charge of branches and music and trumpets and bakery, and salt, and wood and drink offerings and bird offerings and lots and water and signs and showbread and incense and curtains and robes and all of that.

And then there were nine Levites and then there were Scribes and then there were Pharisees and the whole of the religious establishment they came up to Jesus in verse 23, and they said, "By what authority are you doing these things and who gave you this authority?" It was an authority battle that took him to the cross.

Where are your Rabbinic ordination papers? Where are your credentials? The issue was authority. Jesus answered and said to them, "I'll ask you one thing too, which if you tell me I'll tell you by what authority I do these things." Here's his question. "The baptism of John was from what source? From heaven or from men?" Boy Jesus could ask the impossible questions. If they said, they began reasoning, verse 25, "If we say from heaven he'll say to us then why did you not believe him," and what was it that John said? He said that Jesus was whom? The Messiah, the Lamb of God, the Savior of the world. So if they said from heaven he's going to say why didn't you believe him. "But if we say from men we fear the multitude for they all hold John to be a prophet." So they're caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place. And answering Jesus they said, "We do not know." Now the level of desperation to bring them to that kind of admission must have been a crushing blow to their pride. They really had nothing to say except that they were agnostics. We don't know. He said to them, "Neither will tell you by what authority I do these things." You know what this is? This is sort of a judicial shutting down. There was a time earlier when he told them, remember, I read it to you in John 7. He won't tell them any more. They're hard hearts have gone beyond the point where he will deal with them.

And then he gives a trilogy, this is on Wednesday, he gives a trilogy of judgment parables that literally devastates them about sons in the vineyard and a second one about slaves and sons in a vineyard and then about a feast connected to a wedding and all three of those parables were public. All these leaders are there, the masses are there, and Jesus publically publically attacks them in these stories, devastating them in front of the people, undermining their false authority. I wish we had time to go through them, but we don't.

Following those three parables they get into a dialogue of three questions, questions about paying tax, remember to Caesar. Questions about the resurrection, about the lady who had so many husbands everybody was going to wonder who's she'd be in heaven, whose wife she'd be? And then questions about the great command and what was it? And Jesus answered all those questions with further devastation about their authority. They were overmatched, they were frustrated and they were defeated publically on their turf and the anger became so volatile that this is what led within two days to the execution of Jesus.

It all leads up to verse 1 of Chapter 23 and I'll just take you there and leave you there for this morning. 23:1, here's how he wraps up his commentary on the current religious establishment. "Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to his disciples saying, the scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all they tell you do and observe."

Isn't that interesting? When they speak the Mosaic Law obey it even in the mouth of a false spiritual leader the word of God is still true. So when they speak the Mosaic Law you do it, just don't do the way they do. "They say things and don't do them. They tie up heavy loads and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger."

I'd say this is a pretty direct approach with all of them standing there and the crowd all around. "They do all these deeds to be noticed by men; they broaden their phylacteries, they lengthen the tassels of their garments. They love the place of honor at banquets, the chief seats in the synagogue," and the next verse, "the like to be called Rabbi," etc. etc. And then in verse 13 he turns away from the crowd to them and he says, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." Verse 15, "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. Verse 16, "Woe to you blind guides." Verse 23, "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." Verse 25, same thing. Verse 27, verse 29, and so it goes. The most blistering malefaction he ever gave he gave on their turf in the temple grounds to these leaders with the whole crowd gathered at the Passover listening to what he was saying. You can imagine the air was absolutely electric. It was all a battle over authority.

Now listen carefully to what I say as I conclude. Authority based on the truth of God was important enough for the Son to enter in to a level of conflict, which resulted in his own execution. You understand that? We're not dealing with something that is optional here. We're dealing with the truth that must be proclaimed with authority and no one should be allowed to evade the implications of its significance. We need men who preach and men and women who teach with authority because they speak the word of God.

Here we are at a time when authority is resented. It is resented all through our culture and I'm going to show you that tonight as I go into the culture a little bit and show you how our culture hates authority. It's found its way into the church and there's never been a time when authority was valued less and needed more, never a time when the word of God was valued less and needed more, never

a time when biblical exposition was valued less and needed more. The Lord gave his life for sinners but what brought him to the cross was a conflict over authority.

The church, beloved, is God's voice and it is the authority because it is us who preach and teach his word. We are really the authority in the world. We're the ones who have the real message. We're the ones who know the truth of God and we must speak it authoritatively with conviction. We expect a response, but we also expect while it is the foolishness of preaching to some, it is the salvation to those who believe, right? And while there will be some Christians who will disdain clear doctrine, precise teaching, sound doctrine, there will be other Christians who will be protected from deception and led into the path of blessing by it. And that's our commitment. Well don't miss tonight. We'll look a little more into this 23rd Chapter and I'll talk about false systems of authority that exist in the church today.

Father, thank you again this morning for our dear people, these faithful wonderful folks who come week after week to be fed and to worship you and to exalt your great name. Bless them Lord. May the word find root in all our hearts and may we be faithful in living it out for your glory in Christ's name. Amen.

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