

Title: The Book of Mark: Part 34

Speaker: Kevin Norcross

Passage: Mark 11:27-33

Big idea: The truth of Scripture wins against the lies of this world.



We are continuing on in the book of Mark, looking at Mark 11:27-33. In this passage we will see Jesus' battle with the religious leaders of his day.

I have never been in a physical fight with anyone. I think it is because I am so big and strong, and I intimidate people.

I have gotten into arguments with people before, and felt really bad after, I have gotten into battles on the road with other drivers, I have fought hard in sports trying to win, I have wrestled fish on my fishing rod, but I have never been in a fist fight.

I have watched many boxing matches. The work that goes into preparing and training for these matches is a lot. It is crazy watching boxers walking down into the ring with the crowd cheering, or booing. They have to study their opponent, their skills and abilities and tactics. As well as train their own skills and abilities.

The story that we are going to read is a little bit like a boxing match, or a fight.

At this point in Mark, Jesus carries on his mission of establishing his Kingdom and clashes against the Jewish leaders. It is a battle between Jesus in the name of God's authority and Jewish leaders and their human authority.

The arena where these battles take place is in the temple. We will see the truth of God's Word clash with the religious ideals of the day. And we are going to see how Jesus masterfully wins the argument.

In the background we are also going to be looking at and comparing our current society and its attack on the Church as well as the religious attack against the Church. This battle is still present today and we need to fight the good fight.

²⁷ They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. ²⁸ "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked.

"And who gave you authority to do this?"

²⁹ Jesus replied, "I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. ³⁰ John's baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!"

³¹ They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' ³² But if we say, 'Of human origin' ..." (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.)

³³ So they answered Jesus, "We don't know."

Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

Mark 11:27-33

So, here we see this battle take place. The Jewish leaders throw their punches, and Jesus' counter attacks. They are coming at Jesus with all their wit and smarts and Jesus destroys them. You face these similar battles today against you personally and we face these battles against the church.

What we need to be reminded of and what we can bank on is our Big Idea.

BIG IDEA

The **truth of scripture** wins
against the **lies of this world.**



No matter how the Jewish leaders tried to derail what Jesus was doing, God's truth reigned supreme. No matter how much comes against you personally and corporately as the church, God's truth reigns supreme.

Mark 11:27-28, "They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. 'By what authority are you doing these things?' they asked. 'And who gave you authority to do this?'"

We learned last week from Pastor Neil about the fig tree and the rottenness of the people's hearts. He talked about opening up the coconut as a kid and it being rotten, but when it is ripe it smells so good. We want our lives to be a sweet fragrance to God. Jesus had cleansed the temple and called out the religious leaders and taught the disciples about effective prayer.

Jesus and the disciples went back to Jerusalem and entered the temple area. This is the third time Jesus and the disciples entered Jerusalem, and this would have been on the Tuesday of Holy week.

This was the focal point of his ministry while in the city, and the battle arena. Jesus entered the battle arena and caused a stir and commotion. People would have been talking about what He did in the cleansing of the temple and the fallout from that. Everyone was talking about it and could not wait to see what He was going to do next. He was challenging the rulers and leaders of the day and people didn't want to miss it. Like when a fight breaks out in a school yard and the kids gather around because they all want to see what is going on. People did not want to miss the drama and entertainment.

Jesus faces opposition again, by 3 main groups:

- Chief priests
- Teachers of the law
- The Jewish elders

These groups made up the Sanhedrin which was the high court of the Jews. The leaders who made up this group would have been the smartest and most biblically educated of the day. They would have been dripping with religious pride and arrogance but of course this did not affect Jesus or throw Him off at all. He entered that boxing ring ready to go!

The Sanhedrin comes at Jesus with all their brilliance, but it is no match for Jesus' witty responses. They lay out traps and snares for Jesus, but they are no match for the cleverness of Jesus' responses. Rather than defend himself to a group of people who are there to judge Him rather than understand him, His goal is to reveal himself to all who are listening and those who would believe.

In His response, Jesus also leads the way and sets an example to all who will follow after Him of how to navigate through the traps and snares that the enemy sets out for us on our journey in this Christian life. Sometimes Satan will use religious people, others in this world, distraction, temptation, sin, and, or sickness to attack you. But Jesus teaches us how to fight these battles through the truth in Scripture.

Jesus cleansing the temple was a huge deal. He caused a big scene and Jesus took drastic measures to prove his point. The fact that he was met with such a powerful group of leaders is because Jesus was making such a big impact. They would have wanted to arrest Jesus on the spot but could not, due to his popularity and the vast following that he had. So, rather than arrest Him, they question Him and try to trick him into saying something that would give them reason to arrest Him.

They think they are so smart, but they have no idea who they are dealing with. They are about to pick an argument with the wrong guy! They ask Him by what authority are you doing these things. They are wanting to challenge his authority, asking “by what authority” Jesus does things.

Jesus was there to establish his authority on this earth. “These things” being the cleansing of the temple. They try to get Him to say the wrong thing and then give them the excuse to arrest Him. There is so much at stake in this battle for both sides. While the Sanhedrin would have been worried, afraid, and would have been scheming and developing their battle plan, Jesus with all his glory and power, calmness and confidence, responded with a solid left hook.

Mark 11:29-30, “Jesus replied, ‘I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!’”

So, Jesus answers the question by asking another question. He asks the leaders if they think God was behind John’s mission or not. At first glance, you might think that Jesus is evading the question, or thrown off by it, or perhaps trying to lead them astray. But as you look deeper into it you realize that this was actually a brilliant response.

That is one of the amazing benefits of digging deep and studying scripture because at first glance you would miss so much of what Jesus is saying. Take the time to slow down and dig in and study. It is beneficial for our understanding of Gods Word.

The phrase “John’s Baptism” meant all the ministry that John did. So, Jesus is asking them about the whole ministry of John the Baptist. The phrase “from Heaven” meant from God. The word Heaven was a common Jewish substitute for the divine name of God.

Jesus is basically asking them “was John’s ministry and teaching from God?”

Now remember, a major part of John’s ministry was baptizing Jesus.

Mark 1:9-13, “At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.’ At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.”

See in that moment when John baptized Jesus, God’s voice declared Jesus as God’s Son. Heaven opened and the Spirit descended on Jesus like a dove. So, if the Sanhedrin really wanted to know “by what authority” He is doing this, they have to look at John’s baptism of Jesus for the answer.

If they acknowledged that John was sent by God, then they would have to acknowledge Jesus being sent by God. If John’s mission was ordained by God, then so is Jesus’ mission, and therefore what he did at the temple was by legitimate authority.

It was a big deal what Jesus did at the temple. Again, he calls them out for their hypocrisy. They were in control, and they had a lot going for them and Jesus messed it all up. They were using the temple for their own

gain and not for prayer. In this moment Jesus puts the religious leaders on their heels, saying a decision about John is a decision about Jesus.

This jab would have hurt the Sanhedrin very much. Immediately the group goes into strategy mode. Like a football team in a huddle getting ready for the next play, or any sports team calling timeout so the coach can pull out the playbook and figure out the strategy, like a boxing match in between rounds where they strategize how to win the fight.

For a few years I coached my daughter's volleyball team, and we would work hard at practice, and we would get ready for games. There is a lot of momentum in sports and once a team gets going and gaining momentum they get on a roll. One strategy that we use in volleyball is if I sensed the momentum shifting and lose a few points in a row or a server is serving and they are really good, you call a time out and this just gives your team a chance to reset, and hopefully throw the other team off their momentum.

Mark 11:31-33, "They discussed it among themselves and said, 'If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' But if we say, 'Of human origin' ...' (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.) So they answered Jesus, 'We don't know.'"

Jesus' response puts them back on their heels and they knew they were losing this fight. They needed to "discuss" things because they knew that they were in a tough spot. They were stuck they were backed in a corner and in deep trouble.

They were very aware that either way they answered Jesus "from Heaven" or "of human origin" would put them in a predicament. Either they would recognize that John was sent from Heaven, and they would also need to believe that Jesus was from Heaven too. Or they would dismiss the ministry of John as human and upset the people. They had a lot on the line here.

If they claimed, "from Heaven", they would be admitting that everything Jesus said about the temple and the fig tree were correct. Jesus was challenging their authority in His quest to set up this new Kingdom and authority.

If they claimed, "of human origin", they would upset the people. Many people believed that John was a true prophet sent by God. Denying John's ministry would have put many people in opposition to them. This would bring their ratings down with the people, it would look bad in the polls.

So, they plead ignorance. They try to save face by just not answering the question. They say, "we don't know".

That is not entirely true. They have suspicions about who He is, but they were unwilling to enter into real dialogue with him since they are unwilling to know. Their hearts were hard, and they were not willing to listen to Jesus and truly get to know Him.

Jesus did not feel the need to defend Himself against this group, but His desire was that others around who had soft hearts would hear the message.

Sometimes there are people who challenge your biblical views or perspectives and they come at you. Not with a desire to learn and know who Jesus is, but they just want to pick a fight with you and try and trick you and back you into a corner. Be cautious and careful around people like that. Be sensitive to the leading of the Spirit and be cautious.

I remember when I was doing youth ministry and I was talking with a friend who was facing difficulties of people coming at him for his faith. He was getting counseling to try to deal with it. He told me this piece of advice his counselor told him that I will never forget. "Don't bleed in front of sharks".

You need to be cautious of who you are vulnerable around and while you should defend your faith, you also ought to be careful around those who are out to get you and be smart and savvy just like Jesus was with this group. Be vulnerable with people that you trust but be cautious and guarded with people who are like the religious leaders in Jesus' day.

Again, Jesus brilliantly handles this tricky group of people who had an agenda to derail His mission. Thankfully Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit and navigated through this situation in an amazing way. And it is an example to us.

How can we apply this to our lives?

We see this throughout scripture that God's people are often in tricky and difficult situations and through the leading of the Holy Spirit they are able to get through it.

- Like Moses leading the people out of Israel - He knew what God wanted him to do and followed God's leading and direction.
- Like Shadrach, Meshak, and Abednego not bowing down to idols when everyone else was - They stood up against the lies of their day through the power of the Spirit.
- Like David standing up against Goliath when everyone else was afraid - He would not allow this giant to defame God's name and He knew that God gave him the strength to beat the lion and the bear and God would defeat Goliath too.
- Like Noah building the ark even though everyone was making fun of him - He did not bow down to the pressure of society that he faced day in and day out.

We need to remember that the Holy Spirit that was at work in these situations and in others throughout Scripture is the same Spirit at work in our lives today. As Christ followers we can lean into God and ask for help when we face difficult situations or decisions or pressures or when we need to defend our faith.

Just like this group were trying to derail Jesus' mission, the same spirit that was within them is also at work in our world today. Satan, the enemy of our soul wants to derail what God is doing in our lives.

Each and every one of you has purpose on this earth to fulfil God's will for your life and to do your part as a member of the body of Christ to push God's mission forward. You can expect to face difficulty and opposition and we need to depend on God's word and the leading of the Spirit to help us through. As a church we need to be clear of what our purpose is and why we exist.



WestPark Church
EVERYDAY PEOPLE

Our Mission:
Everyday people on a
journey together pursuing
Christ.

We have this mission to pursue Jesus and become like Him and have an impact on those around us. We have values that are important to us as a church to help us impact others.



ACTIVE FAITH

Demonstrated by...
engaging in evangelism, discipleship,
worship, and biblical community.

We are serious about our faith being more than just calling ourselves a Christian, but seeing it lived out in our lives, in our families, and in our communities.



SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Demonstrated by...
developing healthy servant-leaders.

We are serious about training leaders and leading well.



CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Demonstrated by...
embracing multiple cultures and
generations.

We have a unique church in that we have a wide span of generations and cultures across four different language congregations. It is a unique and really cool quality of WestPark, and something that we place value on maintaining.



NEXT GENERATION

Demonstrated by...
reaching children, students, and young
adults, empowering them to lead.

We must reach the rising generations and give the ministry to them. We are serious about that. Notice that last part of the demonstrated by statement, 'empowering them to lead.'



We invest a significant amount of our time, energy and finances in direct missionary support, local initiatives, and in our language congregations. We also have our partnership with Cuba.



- Prioritize relationships both inside the church (being in community, a life group for example) and outside (building relationships with people who are not followers of Jesus).
- Attend church. Weekly corporate worship is very important. This is the one thing that the most people are involved in. In this category are also other age and felt need gatherings (kids, students, men and women’s ministries, ect).
- Take time to serve and give. This step means we invest in the life of WestPark with our time, talents, and treasures. We encourage tithing and serving on a ministry team, and actively being involved in ministry.
- Hunger to know Christ. Personal spiritual development, classes, seminars, leadership development, and encouraging you to develop that hunger personally in your daily devotions.

This is our mission as a church and the enemy is going to try and derail us from that and tear us down. We must fight hard to stay on mission as a church body. There is so much at stake here. God is doing great things here in each of your lives and corporately as a body, and we need to fan that flame.

What are some ways that Satan attacks us and our mission?

- Religious and pious people like in Jesus’ day
- Societal pressures
- Hypocrisy within the church
- Watering down the truth of God’s Word
- Idealistic worldly views that are contrary to Bible
- Allowing sin in our lives
- Laziness and complacency
- Selfishness and pride

There are a lot of things that can tear us down as a church and we need to do our part to prepare.

What are some ways that we can prepare?

- Prayer - a healthy habit and routine of conversation with God
- Bible - regularly reading and studying God's Word.
- Devotions - you know that this is something that is going to make you so strong as a Christ follower and is going to make us so strong as a church.
- Church - gathering like you are today to learn, grow, give, serve, and being committed to our mission, values, and strategy.
- Worship - corporate and individual singing of Scripture and expressing love to God.

But we need to be actively involved in these things in order to prepare for these battles and fight hard. I encourage you if you do not have a regular daily routine of carving out time to spend with God each day you are missing out on something amazing that will absolutely change your life drastically. Start small, walk before you run, but develop this self-discipline of daily time with God.

So, we saw how Jesus came into Jerusalem and challenged the religious leaders. He won the argument with them and set up his authority in his new Kingdom. He did not back down to those trying to derail his mission.

BIG IDEA

The **truth of scripture** wins
against the **lies of this world.**



Remember that as we come against difficulties in battles that truth wins.

In your quiet time this week, I encourage you to reflect on today's message and look for ways to speak truth to the lies in your life. There is a battle going on all around you and the battle Jesus fought the battle in the temple that day with truth, and you can combat the lies around you with truth also.