

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Mark 11: 27-33

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. We'll continue to read Mark chapter 11, verse 27 to 33.

In Mark's account, Jesus' earthly ministry culminated with the last week beginning on Sunday. Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a colt, descending the Mount of Olives, and entered the city, proceeding to the Temple. Inside the Temple, He carefully examined its various articles. Without further action, Jesus left with His disciples and went to Bethany to spend the night. The next day, Monday, Jesus and His disciples left Bethany and encountered a barren fig tree, which Jesus cursed. Jesus then led His disciples into Jerusalem and into the Temple, having examined it carefully the day before. On this day, He began to cleanse the Temple, declaring, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations." Jesus' cleansing of the Temple asserted His authority over it, and He proclaimed that all nations could enter the Temple to pray.

These three incidents enraged the religious authorities of the time, namely the chief priests, scribes, and elders, who sought ways to kill Jesus. After cleansing the Temple, Jesus left the city and returned to Bethany for the night. The third day was Tuesday, a day of great activities for Jesus.

The account in the Gospel of Mark, from Chapter 11: 20, to the end of Chapter 13: 37, records events that occurred on this day. It was a day of extensive teaching by Jesus, often referred to as His day of instruction. Starting from the early morning of this day, as Jesus and His disciples were on their way from Bethany to Jerusalem, they saw the fig tree cursed by Jesus the day before, now withered. Jesus used this example to teach His disciples the lesson of faith in prayer. He emphasized that whatever is asked for in faith will be received, meaning that through prayer, we gain understanding of God's will in faith. Furthermore, through faith, we can obey God's will, and ultimately, God's will be fulfilled in us.

The disciples needed to learn the lesson of faith in prayer to help them face the imminent and extremely humiliating and cruel events about to happen to Jesus. When the teacher is in trouble, the disciples also suffer, and these things that happen to them are entirely unreasonable, unfair, and unlawful. But here, Jesus told them, "If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." Jesus planted a seed here so that in the future, they could also forgive those who persecuted them.

After that, Jesus led the disciples into Jerusalem and entered the Temple. There were seven dialogues in the Temple, recorded from Chapter 11:27, to Chapter 12:44. After speaking in the Temple, Jesus led the disciples out of the Temple and walked up the Mount of Olives, opposite the Temple. Jesus sat down on the Mount of Olives, facing the Temple from afar, and revealed to the disciples the signs of the end of the world and the coming of Christ again. This passage is known as the Discourse on Mount Olives, recorded in Mark Chapter 13. If we carefully examine Jesus' words on this day, we'll realize they revolve around the Temple, addressing the Jews because if they don't believe, they will lose their role in the Temple until the gathering of the Jews from the four corners of the earth at the time of Christ's return. Then Jesus speaks to the disciples about entrusting the role of the Temple to them. The church established by the disciples is to replace the Temple in the New Testament era until the coming of the Christ again. Once we have a general understanding of the background of these chapters, we delve into the details of the text. These are all teachings of Jesus.

Verse 27: "Then they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to Him."

The day before, Jesus cleansed the temple here, and now the sellers of oxen, sheep, and doves were gone, and the money changers were no longer there, so Jesus could walk freely in the temple. The day before, Jesus removed things that shouldn't have been in the temple outwardly, but He hadn't yet addressed the structural issues inside. However, when the outward appearances pose problems, it's often

indicative of internal corruption. Now, because Jesus cleansed the temple, the internal structure of the temple felt threatened, prompting them to resist Jesus.

In Jewish society at the time, the affairs of daily life and religious matters were governed by the Jewish Council. The Jewish Council was composed of three classes of people: the priests, the scribes, and the elders. The priests were responsible for religious sacrifices, while the scribes taught the law, and the elders managed the people's affairs. Because of Jesus' actions in cleansing the temple, all three classes felt threatened, so they united and came to the temple to confront Jesus. At this point, Jesus no longer avoided them but engaged them in dialogue directly.

Verse 28: "And say to Him, 'By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?'"

They came to meet Jesus and questioned Him, primarily about two things. First, they asked Jesus, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?" Let's first look at their first question to Jesus: "By what authority do you cleanse the temple?" The priests had their authority to manage sacrificial matters, the scribes had authority as teachers of the law, and the elders had authority in governing the people's lives. When these three groups approached Jesus, they did so arrogantly, seeing Jesus merely as a carpenter from Nazareth. They came to question Him, implying, "You are nothing special, so what authority do you have to do these things?"

However, they failed to recognize that Jesus held the combined roles of king, prophet, and priest. He certainly had the authority to cleanse the temple. Furthermore, they did not recognize Jesus as the Son of God, and the temple was God's house. Jesus was the master of the temple, so naturally, He had the authority to do anything within it. Their second question was, "Who gave you this authority?" At that time, the priests were predominantly Sadducees who obtained their priestly qualifications through political means, gaining authority over sacrificial matters in exchange for financial benefits. The scribes were mostly Pharisees, educated in the law and considered experts by the Jewish people. Their authority stemmed from

their expertise and recognition by the people. And what about the elders? They were leaders in the community, usually esteemed individuals who were selected from among the people. Thus, since the three groups believed their authority had a legitimate source, they questioned Jesus about the source of His authority. However, they failed to understand that Jesus was sent by God the Father and held authority from God Himself.

Verse 29: "But Jesus answered and said to them, 'I also will ask you one question; then answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.'"

Jesus certainly knew their evil intentions; they were merely looking to cause trouble. Jesus answered truthfully, knowing they wouldn't believe or listen anyway. Therefore, Jesus chose to respond with a question, adding a condition: "If you answer me, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things." Jesus hoped that by engaging them in questioning, they might open their hearts to truly understanding who He was as they pondered the questions. In doing so, they might have the chance to repent and believe.

Dear brothers and sisters, many times when someone asks you a question with a provocative attitude, seeking to trap you in your words, direct answers may not be the best approach because the other party is unlikely to listen anyway. Direct responses can lead to confrontation. Instead, using questions can be more effective. If the other party genuinely seeks the truth, they will carefully consider your questions. If their hearts are open, perhaps in the process of seeking answers, they may see the truth, and there's a chance they might change their minds.

Verse 30: "The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men? Answer Me."

Indeed, Jesus' question pertained to John's baptism. By this time, John the Baptist had already died, yet his reputation had spread among the Jewish people. Because of John's uncompromising nature and his martyrdom, he had earned widespread

respect among the Jews. Therefore, Jesus' question was about the source of John the Baptist's baptism. Was his baptism from heaven or from men? Jesus told them that if they answered this question, He would then answer theirs.

Verse 31: "And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?'"

These people were quite clever; upon hearing Jesus' question, they realized it was a dilemma. If they answered "From heaven," Jesus could easily follow up with, "Why then did you not believe him?" Admitting that they did not believe in John the Baptist's ministry from heaven would imply disbelief in John's testimony about Jesus being the greater one to come, as John himself testified in Mark 1:7-8: "And he preached, saying, 'There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'" This was John's own testimony. If John's baptism was indeed from heaven, then his testimony was true, leading to the natural conclusion that Jesus' authority was also from heaven. Therefore, they couldn't choose this answer.

Verse 32: "But if we say, 'From men'—they feared the people, for all counted John to have been a prophet indeed."

If they chose the second answer, saying that John's baptism was from men, they would risk offending the people, as the Jewish populace held John in high regard, considering him to be a prophet. This would anger the crowds, and they were afraid of stirring up public outrage. They were typical politicians, always prioritizing their own interests rather than the truth. Usually, the truth is clear-cut, black and white, but when considering the consequences of the truth, if it might harm your interests, people tend to shy away from it. This was especially true for the priests among the general populace; they had obtained their positions through political means and couldn't afford to alienate the masses.

Dear brothers and sisters, this is also one of the reasons for the widespread weakness in the church today. Many preachers, when speaking for the Lord, often dilute the truth and add yeast to make it more palatable, fearing to offend the masses. Consequently, the truth they preach is no longer the truth. We hope that believers can return to the original texts of the Bible and see how God's word actually speaks. While often challenging, this isn't a problem. We can only humbly come before the Lord, honestly revealing our true selves to Him, and seeking His help. We must not lower the standard of truth just to feel good about ourselves. We should accurately understand what truth is, and seek God's help in our shortcomings and deficiencies.

Verse 33: "So they answered Jesus and said, 'We do not know.' And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.'"

The chief priests, scribes, and elders didn't dare to answer Jesus' question. They were unwilling to put themselves in a difficult position, so they replied, "We do not know." In reality, they did know the answer, but they were afraid to speak the truth, which means they were lying. Jesus had set a condition from the beginning: "If you answer my question, then I will tell you directly what authority I have." Since they couldn't answer, Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things." They were lying, but Jesus was not.

The first challenge posed by the members of the Jewish council, like the first challenge Jesus faced, was about His authority. Similarly, the first lesson that saved saints today need to learn is about the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ over us. Since Jesus died for us on the cross, we can be born again, we can be saved, because this life comes from Him. Naturally, He has authority over us, and this authority is the authority of life. We follow the Lord, obeying His authority, not by gritting our teeth and rigidly accepting Christ's authority as we imagine. Such an approach is not sustainable. Instead, through the growth of life, as life progresses, our

understanding of God's authority deepens, and we naturally obey the authority of the Lord. This obedience is natural, it is life-giving, and it doesn't feel forced.

Let's pray together: Lord, as we engage in our daily reading of Scripture, help us to not only come to know You more deeply but also to understand ourselves better. For life is in You, and this life is the light of all men. As our lives grow, we receive further illumination. We willingly lay down ourselves and submit to Your guidance in our lives. May each day bring growth in life, allowing You to have authority in our lives and to manifest Your glory through us. Bless my daily life, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen!