

SERIES: GETTING TO KNOW JESUS

SUBJECT: THE RIGHT OF GOD

SCRIPTURE: MARK 11:27-12:12

SERMON NO. 24

Introduction

We hear a lot about rights today: about women's rights, criminals' rights, abortion rights, and gay rights. There is the right to life and the right to bear arms. There are spousal rights and children's rights.

The Declaration of Independence says that all of us are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights. Included in that statement is the idea that God also has rights. Because He's the Creator, He is supreme, He is the ultimate authority and owns all rights. In our Declaration of Independence it says that it's from Him that all rights are derived. Without God, there are no rights.

So, the Creator's rights are supreme over the creations' rights. And if the Creator's rights are supreme, they should receive top priority in our thinking and in our obedience. But unfortunately, sometimes the rights of God aren't given a second thought.

Everyone of us who claim to be followers of God must be aware that God has the right of leadership in each of our lives. Everyone of us must see the importance of responding to that right, and see the danger in not responding to it.

In our scripture Jesus gives us four facts to teach us about God's right to leadership, and our response to that right.

I. THE RIGHT OF GOD CHALLENGED (11:27-33).

1. The Leaders' Question. (11:27-28). The chief priests and scribes and elders came to Him with a question. But in reality it was an accusation. "By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you authority to do this?" In essence they were asking Him, "Who do You think You are asking people to follow you?" These religious leaders really didn't believe Jesus was God's Son. And so to excuse their own beliefs, they questioned His authority.

Jesus asked them a question. (11:30). "John's baptism-was it from heaven, or from men?" It was designed to expose the depth of their hypocrisy. They had refused to receive the message of repentance that John the Baptist taught. They were not interested in any messages from any source other than themselves, even if those other messages came from God. So, they were hypocrites.

Their real interest was not in truth, but in what to say. (31-32). They reasoned with themselves, saying, if we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him?...32 If we shall say, of men; they feared the people: For all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed. If they answered him truthfully the crowds might lose respect for them. So they decided to evade the issue, and said, "We don't know." And Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things." They had played their game of questions. And Jesus beat them at it.

2. The Question for us. Are we doing the same thing? Do we, like these religious leaders, question the authority of God over our lives? Do we question the right of God to have us submit to Him?

When Jesus speaks to you from the words of the Bible, do you obey, or treat His words as optional? To do anything less than obey the words of God is, in effect, to question God's right to lead

your life. The religious leaders here questioned Jesus' authority because they did not want Him to lead them. That's the first fact. But there's a second picture...

II. THE RESPONSE OF GOD (12:1-5). He began to speak to them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winevat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

1. The Meaning of the Vine. Everyone in Jesus' day understood that the vine was a national symbol for Israel. The vine was a very meaningful symbol for the Jews. And here it says that God is the owner of the vineyard, Israel is the vineyard, and the farmers are the religious leaders of Israel who rejected God's authority. But the picture Jesus paints is a story of the kindness of God.

God comes to these farmers again and again, through His servants (2-5). At the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. 3 And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. 4 And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. 5 And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some and killing some.

This is a picture of the kindness and mercy of God as He deals with Israel's leaders. Even though they reject His right to leadership in their lives, He keeps coming back with kindness every time.

These servants are the prophets who came to Israel in the name of the Lord with the word of God. But down through the centuries, the religious leaders rejected the prophets. They killed them and

beat them and mistreated them. **Elijah** was driven into the wilderness by King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. **Isaiah** was sawn in half. **Zechariah** was stoned to death near the altar. **John the Baptist** was beheaded. Death and torture were the fate of many of the prophets, or servants of God, sent by God to Israel, because of His kindness.

The farmers rejected the owner of the vineyard and His servants because they wanted the vineyard for themselves. They didn't want His authority, they wanted their authority. But even in that rebellion, the kindness and mercy of God was plainly evident. And friends, as He came to them, so He comes to you and me, again and again.

2. THE QUESTION FOR US. Do you understand God's kindness? Do you realize just how great the mercy of God is toward you? How do you respond to the right of God to lead your life? Do you demand your rights first, or do you submit to His? How you respond makes all the difference. *But there's a third picture...*

III. THE REJECTION OF GOD'S SON (Mark 12:6-8). Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. 7 But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. 8 And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.

1. God was not finished with Israel. Finally, He sent His Son. But instead of respecting His Son, the farmers saw an opportunity to take the vineyard for themselves. Like many do in our culture today, they assumed that God was dead, or was so far away that He couldn't do anything. So, if they killed the only one who claimed to

possess what they wanted to possess, they thought they would be able to take over the vineyard. So they took this son and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.

The owner's son represents Jesus. In fact, what He's doing here is predicting His own death at the hands of these religious leaders. In a few short days, they would deliver Him to the Roman authorities who would carry out His death sentence. They did not want to hear God. They wanted to be their own God. And so, they not only rejected the prophets sent by God, they also rejected God's Son Himself.

2. How we respond to Jesus, makes all the difference. The question here is: When God says, "This is the way - walk in it," do you respond with instant obedience? Or do you say, "God, not now. Maybe when it's more convenient I'll respond. Lord, you don't understand my circumstances. You don't understand what I'm facing. You don't understand my problems."

When we say that, or act like that, we are saying exactly what these religious leaders said to Jesus: "By what authority, Jesus? Who do you think you are, Jesus?" Well, I'll tell you who He is...
...HE'S GOD!-THAT'S WHO HE IS! Do you reject God's right to lead your life? How arrogant can you get? But just wait, Jesus isn't done yet. *There's a fourth picture...*

IV. THE RESULTS OF REJECTING GOD. (MARK 12:9-12.)

1. Judgment . For anyone who questions God's right to lead your life, who rejects His kindness, who ignores His messengers and ultimately rejects His Son, there is only one thing left. Judgment!

The picture here is of the wrath of God directed toward the evil farmers. There is really nothing left for Him to do. He judges them because they have judged themselves. They refused to submit to His right of leadership over theirs. They rejected His kindness over and over again. They treated God's messengers shamefully. Finally, when He sent His Son, they rejected and killed Him. In doing so, they sealed their own fate. And so do we... if we reject God's leadership in our lives.

2. Personal. If you go to hell, friend, you will have to trample on God's mercy and kindness to get there. You will have to push God aside to enter that horrible place.

But that picture isn't just for people who haven't accepted Jesus as the forgiver of their sins or leader of their life. It is for people who say they have a relationship with Jesus, too. If you miss the abundant life that Jesus came to give, it is because you have ignored God's right to lead your life. It is because you have pushed Him out of the way. And It is because you have rejected His kindness and mercy to you.

Now, listen to me. Did you know you can reject God's right to your life by simply choosing not to act. By simply choosing not to respond, you can reject Jesus. By being unresponsive, by putting off following His leadership, you in effect are deciding against Christ.

Illustration: If you are at the airport and the plane is leaving, and you choose not to get on board, in essence you have chosen to do nothing. But you haven't, really. In reality, you've made the decision not to go. Taking no action, still has consequences!

And that's the way it is for anyone who claims to follow Jesus, or someone who is seeking after the truth. If you are unresponsive, or fail to act, you have made a decision.

You have decided to reject God's right to lead your life. And when you do that, you will suffer God's judgment! It could be a lack of a worthwhile life here on earth, or removal of rewards in heaven, or both for the Christian. And it will mean eternal hell for the seeker. The last picture Jesus portrays says..., Judgment will come. No one will escape it.

Conclusion

How are you responding to the right of God to lead your life? Freedom is the ability not to insist on my rights, but to see that God gets His." (Oswald Chambers)

Do you need to affirm His right to your life? Is the Lord speaking to your heart today about your life, and your relationship to Him? - Does that relationship need to get better? Do you need to stop running away from God and turn to Him? Do you need to take care of where you're going to spend eternity? Is God calling you to respond today to His right to lead your life?

If He is, then respond immediately. Do not delay. And receive true freedom today.