

Recap of 1/21/24 message by Pastor Chris (Mark 11:27-12:12):

- Disciples of Jesus Christ recognize His authority. The religious leaders challenge Jesus' authority for His ministry. (11:27-33). Their question is not sincere in nature, but accusatory. It shows their desire to maintain their own authority. They are immediately caught by Jesus' response. They cannot say John the Baptist's authority was from Heaven because they'd be admitting that Jesus' authority is also from Heaven. Nor could they **say it was from men**, because the people believed John to be a true prophet and they feared the people. We can overlook Jesus' authority in our lives too. We sometimes reason among ourselves to find the stopping point for His authority so we can exercise our own. Everything we have, everything we are, and everything we do belongs to the LORD and falls under His authority. Submitting ourselves joyfully more and more to His authority is a central part of the Christian life and characterizes growth toward spiritual maturity.

- Disciples of Jesus Christ have a responsibility to produce fruit. With the context of Jesus' authority framed, He moves into the parable. The setting of the parable is parallel to the setting of Isaiah 5, which tells of Israel's unfaithfulness and coming judgement. This is something the religious leaders of Jesus' day would likely have recognized immediately. The escalating hostility toward the owner's representatives is tantamount to outright rebellion. (12:3-5). The slaves are meant to allude to the prophets that have been sent to Israel. Finally, the Son is sent, and he is treated worst of all. (12:8). God's son is before their very eyes, and they do not recognize His authority. The prophets have been ignored, beaten, and killed, and as Jesus tells this parable, He knows the time is drawing near for His own death. The owner punishes the wicked tenants for their unfaithfulness and rebellion. (12:9)

- As we consider our responsibility to produce fruit for the LORD, I think of John 15:1-11, Jesus' teaching to His disciples that He is the true vine and His exhortation to "abide" or "remain" in Him. First and foremost, this describes union with Christ, being in Christ, that can only be achieved through the grace of God by faith in Jesus as the Christ. I also think of the vine growing among the trellis. The word for "trellis" in the ancient world was "regula" where we get our word regular. It is also where we get the word rule, but not in the sense of rules to follow, rather it was meant as a "rule of life," a way of living to maximize spiritual growth, to encourage fruit production. We should ask ourselves if our habits and rhythms of life encourage fruit in our lives. What ways are our lives "trellised" in a way that is not good for our walk with Christ? What changes can we make to live a life patterned after the true vine, Jesus Christ, so that we bear much fruit unto the LORD?