

AUTHORITY THAT COMES FROM OBEDIENCE

A sermon for Sunday, October 1, 2017, by the Rev. Dr. James Mutayoba

Gospel: **Matthew 21:23-32** ²³ Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you this authority?” ²⁴ Jesus replied, “I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. ²⁵ John’s baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?” They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’” ²⁶ But if we say, ‘Of human origin’—we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet.” ²⁷ So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.” Then he said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

The Parable of the Two Sons

²⁸ “What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’” ²⁹ “‘I will not,’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰ “Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go. ³¹ “Which of the two did what his father wanted?” “The first,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³² For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.”

Authority! Where does it come from? What is it for? God, the supreme being ordained that there should be governing authorities. We are born into governing authorities called ‘*parents.*’ Every believer is subject to governing authorities of various kinds; some are good and some are evil. Authority comes 1) from above or 2) from below. In either case, authority is GIVEN. From above, it is given by God the Almighty, Supreme One. From below, it is given by parents, by teachers, by the government, or by other people.

The Chief Priests and the Elders of the people asked Jesus, “By what AUTHORITY are you doing these things? And who gave you that AUTHORITY?”

- 1) The things He was doing were, by implication, from some authority, some power.
 - * Teaching with authority -- not as the Scribes and Pharisees.
 - * Effective healings which nobody else could do.
 - * The triumphal entry into Jerusalem with multitudes waving palms and singing Hosanna.
 - * The cleansing of the Temple.
- 2) Jesus acts certainly did not the result from the authority of religious or political rulers of the day (who were from below).
- 3) Since AUTHORITY must come either from above or below, Jesus AUTHORITY must certainly have come from God (from above) because His works were mighty works.

Jesus answered the Chief Priests and Elders questions in the Rabbinic way, with another question. He said, “*John the Baptist’s Baptism - did it come from Heaven or from man?*”

When they declined to answer, Jesus told the Parable of the Two Sons. The first son went to the vineyard after first refusing to go. The second son agreed to go work in the vineyard, then did not go. **Unlike** either son, Jesus never disobeyed His Father. He never said “yes” and didn’t go - He never said, “I will not” and regretted it afterward. According to Philippians 2:5-8, Jesus had the right mind, the right thinking and the right response to the Father. Right thinking produces right actions. Actions that we do are the fruit of our deepest thoughts. Jesus gave up His

privileges as the Son of God. He was obedient (humbled) to the point of death, even on the cross. Based on this obedience, God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name above every name that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bend and every mouth should confess that Jesus is LORD. Authority comes from obedience. Jesus authority was *from above* because He was obedient to the Father. He **IS** the obedient Son.

We are not Jesus, we do not rank with Him nor are we as obedient as Him -- we are not His equal. However, obedience is required of us just as we require it of our children. We give them a 'time-out' if they don't listen or obey.

The first son in the parable grieved his father and dishonored him in a society that prioritized honor and respect. But he regretted his actions, repented and did what he was asked to do. This was an act of self-reflection and repentance. Nothing pleases God more than a sinner that repents. For that reason, we always start our worship with a brief Order of Repentance and Forgiveness. It brings joy to the heavenly Parent (just as to earthly parents) when a child says, "*I am sorry, forgive me.*" Let us always be obedient and repentant.

Clearly, God delights in the brokenness of any sinner who repents, no matter what he/she may have done. God delighted even in the moral reprobates of the Bible, namely the tax-collectors and the prostitutes, who repented. The door was left open for Scribes and religious leaders of Jesus day, as it is left for the self-righteous of today who are in our midst. **Repent and be forgiven.** The Scribes and religious leaders refused to repent and believe. Therefore, they were not forgiven.

The way of righteousness has been shown to us by Jesus. We no longer have any excuse or someone else to blame. Sons and daughters of God, OBEY!! Go in the vineyard and serve God. God delights in *our* brokenness and humble obedience.

Let us always be obedient and repentant! AMEN!!