

PRAISE INTERNATIONAL
AUTHORITY OR AGENCY?
MATTHEW 21:28-32

Good Morning

Prayer Needs - Louise - Preston – Ann

Open House – 6214 Vance Ave – 12-2 pm, and Home dedication

Several years ago I had a friend Derek Loux who when we met had started a small House of Prayer in Indianapolis - has since passed away in a terrible car accident he was a very talented musician and later was invited to serve as one of the Senior leaders at the House of Prayer in Kansas City. Every year IHOPKC used to host a massive conference at the end of the year for young people called ‘One Thing’. This conference would host 15-20,000 people from all over the world but it was also a time when we Denise and I would try to connect at least with Derek and his wife Renee - more than once staying in their house as they were staying in the hotel connected to the conference center.

One time as we were having coffee together at the hotel Derek told the story of what had just happened to him at the conference - he was a bit late arriving and was heading back stage to get ready to lead worship when he was stopped by a 20 year with a security vest on who demanded to see his credentials before he could ‘permit’ him to go backstage. The credentials he had left in his hotel room. To which I said something like ‘seriously?’ By this point nearly everyone at these conferences knew ‘who’ Derek was and had heard him lead - but this dude was ‘doing his job’. As Derek told us the story smiling he said something like ***‘nothing worse than an intern with authority’***.

That phrase has become one of my catch phrases to describe my life when I encounter a person who is obviously struggling with insecurity and has an obvious need to prove their ‘power’. Do you know what I am talking about? Those moments when you encounter the person who has an obvious need to prove their power and competency? It can be as silly as the person who makes someone wait to help or serve them...because they can prove that they have ‘authority’.

In our text Jesus tells a story in response to a question that was asked of Him - as the religious leaders, by what Authority do you do these things? Jesus has just confronted the perversion of the religious system that by its working - left barriers to the sick, the blind, the lame, women and children to come to worship. In my upbringing I often heard the teaching on the ‘cleansing of the temple’ (that term is not used in the text) as Jesus confrontation with the greedy money systems of the temple - true. Yet the primary point of Jesus confrontation was not money but the systems that created barriers to those who coming to worship! This is about Prayer - friendship and communion with God - NOT your religious systems of debt and merit - Jesus is revealing that the core of worship was always about surrendering to Mercy and Grace.

After that exchange it is here that the religious leaders come demanding to see Jesus badge - His credentials - by what Authority - revealing in their question an inherent misunderstanding about Authority. By the way a confusion that still plagues us today - the assumption that ‘authority comes from outside a person’....oh wait that's another version of the Merit system isn't it?

Jesus tells a story of 2 sons - both responded with words - no and yes. Yet only one whose life was actually directed by the Father's desire - in the end the two sons say one thing but do another. Jesus concludes the story with this question

And the secret is simply this Christ in you!
Yes, Christ in you bringing with Him the hope of all the glorious things to come.
Col 1:27b JB Phillips

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- *'Tell me now, which of these two sons did the will of his father?'*
- *They answered him, 'the first one.'* You are right...!

There is more to Authority than just having the right answer. Authority is not about your badge or even your sassy response to the badged person *'you can't tell me what to do...your not the boss of me'*.

Jesus reveals that Authority is not a credential earned or conferred. Authority is a heart living in surrendered, settled participation with a good, generous and compassionate Father and that is Good News!

In our text we see this exchange between Jesus and the religious leaders and **if we are honest with each of us.**

- You see the way these religious leaders understood Authority represents the way most of us see authority - delegated, conferred power - there is a reason an officer wears a badge.
- There is also a good reason to not ignore that badge. Yet the truth be told not many of us like being corrected or being told what to do...**by what authority are you doing these things?**

Real authority is about Agency that is anchored, settled and surrendered to the Love of the Father.

Remember that the persons asking this question are **experts in Debt and Merit.**

- In this story Jesus reveals that *'John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him...'*
 - Your badges are rooted in your systems of debt and merit.
 - I am inviting you to change the way you think to learn another way - the 'way of righteousness'.
 - Yet you did not 'repent'.

Here is what I find fascinating - most of us equate the word repent with something we say - Jesus reveals repentance not as what was said - but what was done.

- With that explanation what should we notice about the 'way of righteousness?'
- What did Jesus say after talking about cities that had not 'repented' in Matthew 11:28-30 *'Come to me...(I love the way that the MSG and TPT say this) learn from Me, learn how I do it...for I am gentle and humble in heart'*
- We learn the 'way of debt, merit and authority' really easy because we are surrounded by it day in and day out.
- Learn how I do life - ***I am meek and gentle.... and you will find rest for your souls....the way of Righteousness.***

Real Authority is Agency that is anchored in the love of the Father

Righteousness - comes from two Hebrew words that can be interchanged with the word Justice.

- 1st word for Righteousness-Justice - Means **Correction** (mishpat)
- I don't have to live by a debt or Merit system or in a badge system of authority - delegated by someone – I can choose to correct the way I live - I can surrender to the way of Jesus - who did not need power or force but in meekness and gentleness reveals the Love of the Father.
- Correction in how I see and inhabit the world blessed are those who mourn, lament, who are merciful, gentle...pure in heart.

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- **2nd word for Righteousness - Justice - Means Cooperation.**(Tsadaq)
- So the Love of the Father at work in my life is not something have to wield over - but rather yield to and cooperate with in my life – brings with it a cleansing.
- Authority is revealed as I cooperate with mercy and grace in real time in my life. It is the expression and Gods life in and through our own.

This is how the Apostle Paul describes what it looked like to walk the way of Righteousness
1 Thess. 2:5-8 NASV

For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is our witness— nor did we seek honor from people, either from you or from others, though we could have asserted our authority as apostles of Christ. But we proved to be gentle among you. As a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children, in the same way we had a fond affection for you and were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us

Authority externally or Agency to embody the Mercy and Grace of the Father in our lives?

Said another way - is Righteousness and Justice a Noun or a Verb?

- Theologically it is indeed a Noun - yes it does bring **Correction**.
- Yet real Authority in our life is not just the right words - but a life of surrender - a Verb **cooperation** - called the Way of Righteousness is very much a new way of living and inhabiting my world.

All authority originates in God - yet here is the amazing news it is not exclusive to God.

- God shares His authority as we surrender to His ways - learn from Me.
- Learn the rhythms of grace - I am meek and gentle.
- His Authority is not a badge but the **abundance of His life revealed in our own!**

Derek told me that while internally he wanted to say to this intern ‘do you know who I am?’ he instead surrendered to reaching out to one of his friends who came and said ‘let him pass - its all good’. You see anyone who has to say ‘do you know who I am?’ is already living in the wrong system of authority aren’t they?

Real authority in Jesus Kingdom is not for those who have the right words but those who have changed their mind and chosen learn His ways in way of Righteousness.

Because Real Authority is a heart living in surrendered, settled participation with a good, generous and compassionate Father and that is Good News!

Closing Prayer

Almighty God, whose most dear Son
went not up to joy but first he suffered pain,
and entered not into glory before he was crucified:
Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross,
may find it none other than the way of life and peace;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. Amen.

And the secret is simply this Christ in you!
Yes, Christ in you bringing with Him the hope of all the glorious things to come.
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