

Upsetting the status quo

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[0 : 0 0] it's been quite a while since we were in Mark's Gospel but this is kind of, we've done it in kind of four chunks this is kind of the final quarter of Mark's Gospel we're going to look at this all the way up until Easter it's kind of Jesus, the last quarter is Jesus' final week as he arrives in Mark 11 as we sort of came to the third quarter we sort of finished with Palm Sunday with Jesus arriving into Jerusalem and then for the, we see whether the Gospel's waited because he got a full quarter just on his last week so we'll be thinking about that all the way up until Easter but let me pray for us as we look at this together Almighty God, we do come to you now and we pray that you'd help us to think on you to be equipped by you to focus our attention on you and we pray that you'd speak to us where there's things wrestling in our hearts trying to drive our attention away from what you've got to say help us to focus our hearts help us to calm our souls and we pray that you'd speak to us and that you'd help us to love you more to know your love for us more and that we would be corrected, rebuked and trained in righteousness and taught by you we ask for this in Jesus' name

Amen Now everyone struggles with change there's no one that doesn't struggle with change it's difficult and it's hard including myself when change happens we find new things difficult the reason we find it hard is because we get used to the way things are getting on with life in our regular patterns routines it brings stability and ease because it's something you sort of go into autopilot the way things are you don't have to think about it and what happens is we take our ways of life for granted in essence we get used to the status quo of life we get used to our rhythms and routines and when those things are upset when they're altered that is when we struggle we find it especially hard if the change causes us to lose something that we really value and if it's causing us to lose something that we've placed a lot of value on it causes us to have an emotional response we can react with anger and frustration maybe you get a few situations that might occur maybe if you've ever got a new boss at work and they change the way things are done and that impacts on how you do your job it feels like you're being disrespected and they don't value what it used to be like you feel a sense of injustice who are coming in and messing everything up your position in the workplace feels threatened and reacting ways to negate the threat because we fear in that example what their way of doing things might mean for us perhaps it's fear of losing the respect we've built up with the rest of the team perhaps perhaps as I'm saying that you can think of other ways in which you feel you might have felt threatened to your way of life by things being changed and when it happens you rail against it because you feel undermined you feel that something is going to be you're going to lose something you feel losing out in this final week of Jesus' life what is apparent throughout is that the opposition to him is increasing it's increasing because of what's gone before his life and his ministry but the opposition to him is increasing and what we see today and in weeks that will follow we see the religious elite are actively looking for ways to discredit him to get rid of him because he is threatening their way of life they fear losing something that they've built up over many years and they will take any opportunity to question him and in secret plot against him to make sure that the change that they fear doesn't happen and it's the change to the power structures that they've had over the people the one who is upsetting the status quo is Jesus just as a recap to where we're up to

I mentioned earlier Jesus had just ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey as the king with people praising and worshipping him but it's following his entrance it's quite a while back since we last looked at this but on entering he goes into the temple courts and he's outraged with what he finds you might call it a holy ridge his zeal for God for his father comes over him because God's dwelling place the temple courts God's dwelling place with man is being used not as some place to go worship God but as a marketplace buying and selling things and you'll remember this he drives those out buying and selling he overturns the tables of the money changers and the benches of

those selling doves and he doesn't allow anyone to carry on merchandise he's in the same chapter just earlier on in verse 15 their position in society is under threat because they've got used to doing this in the temple and he's saying no more

I'm not having this that's what we're going to be thinking about this morning is how do we respond to change and particularly we'll be thinking of how do we respond when Jesus comes and tries to change things perhaps in our life our three points this morning is reflect on that opposition to Jesus the kindness of Jesus and then the response to Jesus opposition to Jesus the kindness of Jesus and then the response to Jesus religious elite as I've said are livid at what's just happened in the temple this conversation that we look at kind of follows on from what's just gone on in the temple they're angry at his actions in the temple who does he think he is?

some upstart some nobody coming in thinking he can do all this in our place this is our territory that is what the background that lies behind the basis of these questions that we see them ask him in verse 28 you see what could make them say to him by what authority are you doing these things?

[6 : 50] and who gave you authority to do this? to just thinking you can come in and change everything I mean you can kind of on surface on a superficial value basis you can actually kind of understand where they're coming from who said you could come and do this?

we're in the temple courts and this is just not what's done you can't just come in here get angry and do whatever you want we've been doing this for years on our terms they're respected they run things they're the ones with the authority and the respect of the people they're angry and they demand an answer who let you do this?

who said you could act like this? because it certainly wasn't any of us Jesus has upset the status quo it can be easy to condemn these guys but what we know is I think is our hearts can be so similar you see when the status quo of our own lives are altered in ways we don't expect we real the same and when there is perceived loss in our life and we don't want it it causes anger it causes bitterness anxiety and frustration and perhaps we might even ask similar questions particularly if there's someone we can blame when Jesus looks at people everyone he sees their hearts he sees hearts that are broken full of sin and he offers to come and reorder their heart he offers to come in and rewire everything he goes into the temple and turns everything upside down so that the temple is a suitable place for the living God to dwell the offer is that he comes he really offers when he comes to you to turn everything upside down in our hearts where we've said we want our own authority to keep going and when we've railed against his but when he comes in he wants to change our hearts he wants to turn things upside down to kick out the mess so that we would be a fitting place for God to dwell that process is not always an easy one is it because whilst you get life and goodness and glory given to you from the living God and your life is reordered you get the blessings of God the things that we've held on to or still hold on to at times that we build our life upon that matter to us

Jesus kicks them into touch he turns us upside down because there's still those areas of our hearts where we oppose him and we want to keep running things ourselves opposition to Jesus' way because he threatens any way of life that says I want to do it my way we can resist him changing things as I said there'll be areas still in ourselves where Jesus wants to bring change he wants to keep on changing you every day every day changing the areas of your heart where you're being saved yes you are saved you will be saved in the end but the process of life is you're becoming more like Jesus being saved every day he's bringing light where there is darkness he's bringing life where there is death and he's making you a fit place where for him to dwell not to be a haven for sin and so he will change you he'll either change you willingly when you say

I want to change or if you don't then he'll change you under discipline but he will change you he loves you too much to leave you as you are he loves you too much to leave you as you are so that's the first point opposition to Jesus the second thing we see is the kindness of Jesus the kindness of Jesus I love I just love the way that Jesus speaks with the men notice with you see Jesus' character here and you see his way notice he doesn't get angry with them he doesn't lose it he doesn't get irate he doesn't mock them but he answers them with a simple straightforward question and he knows that they know the answer he phrases it it sounds like it's almost like a bit of a puzzle you know Jesus replied I will ask you one question answer me and I'll tell you by what authority I'm doing these things

[11 : 47] John's baptism was it from heaven or of human origin tell me we do just have to pause here and refresh ourselves with what Jesus is talking about he's referring to when John baptised

Jesus it happens right at the beginning of Mark's gospel in chapter 1 and it marked the start of Jesus' ministry but this is what if we recall what Jesus said what John said about Jesus before he baptised him he said this after me comes the one more powerful than I the straps of whose sandals I'm not worthy to stoop down and untie I baptise you with water but he'll baptise you with the Holy Spirit it's a stroke of genius from Jesus because he knows they can't answer without getting themselves into notes it's a kindness of Jesus because he's he's giving them an opportunity to see things as they truly are he's actually giving them an opportunity to follow him in that question it's a subtle it's a chance to follow him and actually the question is kind of like those two things it's a warning to them that if they answer rightly they could become followers here because they could work out from his question where his authority comes from where his authority comes from they could work out that they know that it comes from the living

God when Jesus upsets the status quo it has a dual purpose one he is mad at the dishonour to God's house but he's there as a prompt as a warning he turns things upside down ask them questions so that they might realise who they're speaking with and that they might see that what they love is the power and the respect they have from the crowd it's what they've been giving purpose what's given them position and purpose in life they want this control of the people and they don't want to lose that Jesus is there as this warning to show them that maybe their own hearts aren't right with God now I don't know I know pretty much nothing about cars I don't know if you know anything about cars but one thing I do know which is helpful I know that if I get a light on the dashboard or a warning signal when I'm driving

I know that I have to do something with it I know that it's either telling that something is wrong with the car or that it could be simple the obvious one the fuel gauge comes on it's telling me it's a warning it's actually a warning signal isn't it if you don't put fuel in the car you will break down I know that much when I'm driving my car I know other things that there's other lights that come on the car that warn me actually you need to take it to the garage it's take it to the mechanic he needs to lift up the bonnet and look underneath to work out what's wrong and tell me the problem with the car the warning sign tells me it's necessary to look into what's going on warning that I might need to get more fuel that my tire pressure is low and do something about it we need Jesus to lift up the bonnet of our life and show us what's wrong we need

Jesus to lift up the bonnet he's doing that with the religious elite he's lifting up the bonnet and he's saying look this is what you place value on what the crowd think of you you like to control them you like to be in charge you want to do things your way and I'm showing you I'm warning you that this is not the way to go he does it for us he wants to show us by lifting up the bonnet he wants to show us our self reliance our anger our fear our addictions our impatience our lust he wants to lift up the bonnet and show us what we're like it is a kindness of him to show that he's not doing it just to have a pop at you he's doing it out of love to show you that there's something it's a good thing isn't it to have a warning signal on the car that's a really good thing that the car makers have decided to do it's a really good thing that Jesus warns you there are moments in life where we'll feel all over the place there are moments where we'll feel like Jesus is churning things upside down and it feels like he's pointing things out like our sins right at the surface it is a kindness that is there to say to tell you what's going on in your heart and to show you that it's okay for him to have the authority over your life to show that he can't have a hold of you to show that he can't change you and to show you that that thing that is there is actually the thing that's controlling the way that you live but not him it's the kindness of

Jesus the last thing we're going to look at is the response to Jesus how do these blokes respond to Jesus warning his subtle rebuke only in verse 31 we see that they fear losing it they fear the crowd and so they answer the question verse 31 they discussed it among themselves and said if we say from heaven he will ask them why don't you believe him why don't you believe John when he said that the one coming was the one who would baptise with the Holy Spirit why don't you believe him if you believed him you know I was then you listen to me but if we say a human origin they feared the people for everyone held that John really was a prophet so if they say that baptism was just a human origin they'll rail against him they'll rail against these religious leaders you know what you're talking about John's sent from God so they answer Jesus because they don't because they can't answer we don't know where your authority comes from they admit

[18 : 16] John's baptism from heaven they'll have to acknowledge Jesus authority comes from God and give in to him because that means he has authority over them they say John the crowd from

human origin the crowd will believe against them either way whatever they answer they lose their authority and they fear it so they say they don't know the irony of it all as we've mentioned is that it's actually that people what do we see that people have control over them they fear losing the crowd this this is the moment this is the moment that they could turn to Jesus to turn in repentance they could if they recognise his authority in that moment and stop going their own way and attempting to maintain it they will lose something they will lose their authority over the crowd but they'll gain Jesus Christ they have an opportunity for a relationship right there but they choose to turn away from him and as they choose to turn away from him what does

Jesus answer reveals it reveals as they turn away from him he turns away from them Jesus turns away from them he refuses to enter into a relationship with them where they'll speak to them properly on their terms he refuses to answer their question neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things he's effectively saying you can't have a relationship with me if you can't acknowledge my authority then I can't have a relationship with you if you don't acknowledge who I am because I know that you actually know if you want to try and attempt to keep authority of your own life but exclude me go for it but you can't have a relationship with me it's the normal way relationships work isn't it there's nothing strange about this if you don't accept someone whoever for who they are and you want them in your life it's normal that a relationship can't develop if you don't want to acknowledge relationships can't develop where there's a hostility between who someone is or wants to be relationships just can't function on that way even on a basic human level this is the same it's the same here

Jesus Christ speaks differently to different people because he knows what's going in the heart but he's still offering himself to everyone to have a relationship with everyone but it does mean acknowledging his authority he offers everyone the opportunity to acknowledge him and have a relationship with him this moment for them is significant in their life they have to choose we have to choose the offer is to all of us the gospel of Jesus Christ we can choose the gospel of Jesus Christ the good news that he's the one who makes you the offer of relationship with himself that guarantees eternal life even for all the times we've rejected his authority we've been like the religious elite and said we want to do things our own way how dare you come into my life and start saying I've got to do this that and the other I want to keep on living my own way I don't want your way I want my own way which is what sin is when we say my way not your way we've done that we've lived that way we can choose to have him as our saviour and say even though we find that difficult changing everything we still admit that you're our lord and saviour we trust you to take away our sin and to take our punishment our separation from the living God we want to follow you and we admit that you do have the authority over our lives we want to hand over all these ways that we've tried to hold on to we want to hand them over to you and say guide us in life be our lord be our god he does all of those things he's our lord and saviour he does it out of love for us and even with all that he says that we are of infinite value to him and then for the rest of our life into eternity he guides us watches over us protects us and keeps us so that we make it there so that he's with us through it all the ups and the downs that's what's on offer he's offering it to them they don't take it they don't understand it and they don't accept it they want it their own way the offer is to us it's on offer every time Jesus says it even if we've been following him for years he keeps on telling us what it's like the way we want the relationship with the one who made us to let him guide us and be with us or to sort it out ourselves because we think we know what's best and we want to keep the status quo and it still challenges us today because there's still those areas of our life that we want to keep hold of there's still those areas of our lives that are controlling our actions that we find it hard to let go of in a way it has authority over the decisions we make and it's hard to let go but with Jesus in your life he does set you free so that you can let go of it and let him direct and guide you Jesus said you have to lose your life take up your cross and follow me what good is it what do you profit if you gain the whole world and lose your soul we have a choice to make and it means everything is surrendered the state of life will be affected and we have that choice to make opposition to Jesus kindness of Jesus response to Jesus where in your heart are you still opposing him know that his kindness to you is revealing is when he reveals to you where you still do that he's not having a pop at you but it's a kindness to him of him to show you so you can turn away from it and know that he will change you that it's a good thing that he comes in by his spirit and turns over the tables of your heart because he's getting rid of the muck and the grime and the mess and making you like him and so respond to him choose him today and he will like we said watch over

you protect you keep you listen to you be there for you through it let's pray almighty god we come to you today and we know each of us know the areas of our hearts where we're so resistant and we thank you that our hearts are like putting you in your hands and we don't want to be the ones who resist you we want to accept your authority willingly we don't want to be we don't want to be changed by discipline even though that discipline is out of love we want to be changed because we're willing to sit and kneel and know that you fashion us to be like your son and that is a good thing and so we just ask for forgiveness we say sorry for the time where we've rejected your authority and kept trying to do things our own way we thank you for the goodness of the gospel that you're changing us and making us more like yourself and we pray every day we know every day is a choice to follow you to trust and to follow

Jesus and so we pray Lord that you would bless us that you would help us that you would equip us we thank you for the kindness that you are of you to show ourselves a great kindness and that you don't rail and mock or get angry or irate but you speak to us with such compassion and gentleness and kindness that you just we see the beauty of you even in how you treat us and so bless us and help us in all that we do and say to follow you all the days of our life we ask for this in the name of Christ Amen■