



I don't know about you, but I have a lot of cool stuff in my garage--old canoes, backpacks, climbing ropes, fly rods, and mountain bikes. As much as I hate to admit it, I am pretty attached to my stuff.

I have three fly rods—the first one I ever bought, which has a lot of sentimental value; a cheap one that I bought on a whim; and a hand made rod, built by a close friend, that would be unbelievably expensive on the open market, and is absolutely priceless to me.

If you asked to borrow a fly rod, guess which one you end up with? If you weren't happy with the cheap rod and made overtures toward the hand made rod, you would throw me into existential crisis. It is hard to imagine letting go of that rod, even for a minute. It is possible that I would let you hold it for a couple of seconds, but for the life of me, I can't imagine why.

The truth is that we have a hard time holding things loosely. That not only applies to prized fly rods, it applies on an entirely different level to giving ourselves freely to Christ. There is something inside us that is deeply horrified at the thought of surrendering our wounds, our secrets, our fears, our dreams—even into the hands of someone as gentle and capable as Jesus.

In the last half of Mark 11, Jesus confronts the Jewish leadership on the question of authority and ownership—two issues that each of us must settle for ourselves if we are going to follow Christ and enjoy a vibrant relationship with him.

THE ISSUE OF AUTHORITY (11:27-33)

1. Jesus' authority has been a prominent theme in Mark's gospel. The people recognized that Jesus' teaching was nothing like the Scribes and the Pharisees because everything he said had the ring of authority. Rather than telling a paralyzed man to pick up his palette and walk home, he told him, "Your sins are forgiven." When the disciples feared for their lives he commanded the wind and waves to be still. He rode into Jerusalem as the Davidic King and received praise and acclamation from the people. He drove the merchants out of the temple court and, quite frankly, acted as if he owned the place.
 - a. Why do you think that the chief priests, teachers of the law and the elders failed to recognize Jesus' authority?
 - b. Where had their authority come from?

- c. How had they abused their authority?
2. Why do you think Jesus asked them about John's authority?
3. How was Jesus' authority a threat to their authority?
4. Why do we often view Jesus' authority as a threat, or an unpleasant obligation rather than a blessing?
5. How does living under Jesus' authority enrich our lives and prove not only to be a blessing, but God's ultimate blessing?

THE ISSUE OF OWNERSHIP (12:1-11)

1. The vineyard was a popular image of Israel in the Old Testament.
 - a. What is unusual about the vineyard owner in the parable?
 - b. Was there anything at all unreasonable in his request?
 - c. What is unusual about the tenants?
 - d. What does the fact that he was willing to risk his son in order to recover the vineyard tell us about the owner?
2. What are some ways we try to co-opt God's good gifts and act as if we were owners rather than tenants in His vineyard?
3. What does God require of us as tenants?
4. Are his requests at all unreasonable (or even unpleasant)?
5. What happens when we fail to recognize God's ownership of all that we are and all that we have?

A TRAGIC RESPONSE (v. 11)

1. From the beginning of his gospel, Mark has emphasized that the proper response to the gospel is to repent and believe the good news.
 - a. How does the chief priests, teachers of the law and the elders respond to Jesus' message?
 - b. Why do you think they responded with such vehemence and raw hatred?
 - c. Does their response to Jesus' authority and ownership in any way reflect our own?
2. What are some things that we need to repent of and believe if we are going to respond appropriately to Jesus' authority and ownership?