

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ!

All know throughout the region and throughout Jerusalem that Jesus teaches, heals, forgives sins, raises the dead, cleanses lepers, all with authority. So now while he is teaching in the temple he is accosted by the chief priests and the elders who ask him "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?"

Jesus responds to their question with his own question, one about the baptisms done by John the Baptizer. Is it of God, or of man? Answer that and I will answer you. Now dear friends, consider that John was sent by God, he was the Elijah of Jesus' time, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "prepare the way of the Lord!" John's mission was the preaching of repentance, a baptism of repentance, John did so with God's authority.

But if the chief priests and elders can't make up their mind about John, well, can they make up their mind about Jesus? If John's baptism was of God, and John proclaimed that he prepared the way for Jesus then how to explain their lack of trust in God's messenger. But their unbelief has veiled their eyes, even when they talk among themselves, they are simply trying to come up with an answer to Jesus' question so he'll answer their question and they can trip him up, have grounds to arrest him.

Jesus spoke with authority, he taught with authority, every thing he did including telling us the primary commandment, and the one like it, and the new commandment, he did with authority and you and I, well we should do our very best to obey him. You've heard them many times in the years I've been here: to love God, to love our neighbor as ourselves, to love one another as he loves us who are his disciples. To do unto others even as I would have done unto me. Jesus' words carry incredible weight, he is after all, the author of our faith, he completes it in us, he is our salvation.

Remember what Jesus tells us in the Great Commission "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'"

All authority has been given to Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Jesus is trying to help the chief priests and the elders understand who he is, they challenge him constantly, looking for a mistake, looking for something they can charge him with. So perhaps in an attempt to help them, Jesus tells them a parable. The "second son" in his parable is them, the chief priests and elders of the people, they are in no doubt as to what Jesus is saying. Those entrusted with much have not lived up to the trust that God has placed in them, they talk the good fight, but that's all it is, talk. Then there is the first son, he refused to obey his father, but he goes and does it after all. That' the tax collectors and the sinners, that's you and me. Sinners everyone of us. Sure we're baptized, confirmed, we'll be buried by the church, and we're here in

the already/not yet. We help out, we serve, but truthfully, we still don't measure up. Good thing we don't have to earn our way to salvation, because we couldn't do it.

But hear the Good News! Our salvation, our faith, is a gift of God's grace. You've heard that countless times, but it's a story I love to share, the love of God, so radical, so familiar, so surprising, comes to us and brings us home, home to where we belong, home to where our hearts long to be.

The forgiveness of sins, the grace of God, the gift of faith, we have it by Christ's authority! AMEN