

**THE REAL JESUS**  
**A Series on the Book of Mark**  
**“They’re God’s, Not Ours”**  
**Mark 11:27-12:12**  
**New City Church of LA**  
**Speaker: Kevin Haah**

**I. Introduction**

Welcome to New City!

Today is Palm Sunday.

Series called THE REAL JESUS. We are looking at the life of Jesus through the Book of Mark. Today’s sermon is entitled, “They’re God’s, Not Ours.”

Grace and I have three kids. Kaetlyn is going to be 8 this week and we have Bennett and Eliana, 4 year old twins. I remember when we just had Kaetlyn, the house was relatively quiet. She really didn’t have anyone to argue with. We were going for one more, but God blessed us with a two-fur one deal. If we had 2 kids, there is only one person they can fight with: each other. But, with three kids, there are at least 7 different combinations of people they can fight with. And do you know what is the most common word that you hear when they argue? Mine! My something. My turn. My My My.

Then, we grow up and we just think it. We don’t say it as much. Why are you cutting in My space? Why are you wasting My time? I love My toys—we still play with toys; they just get more expensive.

You are I are pretty keen and possessive about our stuff. It’s not just stuff, it’s my time, my relationship, my freedom, my power, my house rules, my computer!

Claiming power over something or possession or ownership in general is a good thing, but if we don’t properly understand it in the context of our relationship with God, it can really mess us up. It can mess us up even if don’t have anything.

What does God have to say is the right approach to everything we have?

That’s what we are going to talk about this.

**Read Mark 11:27-12:12**

Background: We are at the last week of the life of Jesus. It’s about Tuesday. On Sunday, Jesus rode into the Jerusalem triumphantly and humbly. On Monday, he went to

the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers and merchants making money off the temple. Now, it's Tuesday. Jesus is confronted by the religious leaders.

<sup>27</sup>They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. <sup>28</sup>"By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you authority to do this?"

We're talking big wigs. It's the chief priests. They are THE leaders of the Sanhedrin, which is the ruling council of Judaism. So, they came and asked Jesus: what do you think you are? By whose authority do you do this?

<sup>29</sup>Jesus replied, "I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. <sup>30</sup>John's baptism—was it from heaven, or from men? Tell me!"

<sup>31</sup>They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' <sup>32</sup>But if we say, 'From men'...." (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.)

<sup>33</sup>So they answered Jesus, "We don't know."  
Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

It's amazing how Jesus turns the table. Jesus is saying that: your heart is not ready to accept who I am; so, I am not going to tell you. But, I will give you a parable that gives you the answer to your question.

<sup>1</sup>He then began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. <sup>2</sup>At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. <sup>3</sup>But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. <sup>4</sup>Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. <sup>5</sup>He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed.

<sup>6</sup>"He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

<sup>7</sup>"But the tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' <sup>8</sup>So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.

<sup>9</sup>"What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.

<sup>10</sup>Haven't you read this scripture:

"The stone the builders rejected  
has become the capstone<sup>(a)</sup>;

<sup>11</sup>the Lord has done this,  
and it is marvelous in our eyes<sup>(b)</sup>?"

<sup>12</sup>Then they looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.

The chief priests and the elders knew exactly what Jesus was talking about. This imagery comes from Isaiah 5. The man who planted the vineyard is God. He is the owner. The vineyard is Israel. The tenant farmers are the religious leaders of Israel. The servants are the prophets, including John the Baptist. And of course, the son is Jesus himself. He is saying: “I am the Son of God, and you will kill me. But, that death will become a new foundation for a new life and community.”

We have a tendency to read passages like this and focus just on the religious leaders and condemn them, and not really examine whether they apply to us. This passage is not just an accusation against the religious leaders of Israel. We need to examine what it says to us.

**It tells us: (1) Everything is God’s, not ours; and (2) where we get to power to let go.**

## **II. First, They are Not Ours.**

If you get down to the essence of what Jesus is saying, he is saying: God is my father and I am the son. And so, the vineyard is mine—everything is mine. I am the authority over everything. Israel. The Temple. The Universe. You! I don’t answer to you. You must answer to me.

But, we often reverse this. The religious leaders came to question Jesus’ authority. What right do you have to mess with OUR temple? They questioned with the assumption that he does not have authority to do what he did at the temple. The assumption is that it’s their temple and Jesus had to get approval from them first. We also question God about things as if God doesn’t have the authority to do what He wants: Why are you messing with *my* stuff; with *my* life; with *my* health; with *my* money; with *my* career; with *my* relationship?

The point of the story is that we are not owners of anything. God is the owner. The tenants tried to abuse that reality. There is no such thing as MINE in Christianity! Jesus says we are stewards. We are managers. We are tenants. It’s not ours.

There is NO *my* stuff, my time, my life, my house, my sons, my daughters, my body, my health, my career, my relationship, my my my! They’re all God’s and we are merely the caretakers of them for some time. It’s on loan from God to us.

But, just like the tenants in the story, like the religious leaders, we think they are really ours. They worked hard to grow the grapes; so, they feel like it's their labor that got them the harvest. That's exactly how we start to think. We worked hard; so, I deserve all the benefits and they are mine. We look down on the guy who doesn't have as much and think that we are superior.

Even though we give lip service to the idea that everything is God's, many of us don't really believe it. You think: after all, you're the one who worked really hard to get to where you are. Really? That's probably what the tenant farmers thought. But, without the land, without the wall around it, without the pit for the winepress, without the watchtower, they couldn't produce much of anything. In the same way, where you are may have very little to do with your effort. What if you were born in poverty at a Third World country? Would you have become what you have become by hard work? Probably not. And it's obvious that you didn't have anything to do with where you were born, to whom you were born, and when you were born. A significant part of your success has to do with stuff that you didn't have any control over. Let's not kid ourselves into thinking that we are where we are because of our own efforts.

Now, what does this mean? What does it mean that I am a steward? That I don't own anything? Let me try to go over some areas in our lives and see how we can be stewards, instead of owners.

Time. The time that you have is not your own. It's God's time that he has given you to take care of. How are you going to manage your time? Well, since it is God's, we need to use it for him, not for us. You should make sure everything you do benefits God's kingdom. Are you doing stuff with your time that is completely selfish? If all you do is for yourself and your hobby and your fun, you might want to examine if you are a good steward of the time. We talk about managing time, but the important issue is what we are spending our time for? If we think we own our time, that whatever we do with our time is our prerogative, then, you are being like the tenants who took advantage of the landlord.

This doesn't mean you can't take any time to enjoy a hobby or rest and kick back from time to time. But, if that's your priority, you need to reexamine who owns your time.

Stuff that you have. What does it mean to live as stewards of your possessions, rather than the owner of your possessions? It means you are not going to hog it. It means you are going to share it. It's not yours. You need to share whatever you have in trust. Even when you buy a loft or rent a loft, you are going to think about how you can use the loft for God's purposes. When you get into the loft for the first night, you should spend some time dedicating that home to God. God, this is your home.

Whatever you have, if you have the mentality that you have it on loan from God, you are not going to be selfish about what you have. How can I use the car that God has entrusted to me to do His work, to help other people?

Money. The money that we have in possession is not our money. It's God's money. It's not just the tithe that's God money and the rest of our money. That's not what the Scripture teaches. Everything is God's. We own nothing. God has given the money that we have to use for His Kingdom and to help other people. So, you have to ask the question how to best spend God's money for everything you do. Does it make sense to buy this car with God's money? Does it make sense to buy this house with God's money? Does it make sense to gamble with God's money? Does it make sense to go here or there with God's money?

God wants to live reasonably and simply. So, you need to use your money to get reasonable housing, transportation, pay for your kids' education, buy reasonable clothing, food. But, you also need to give to others. You need to practice radical generosity. You need make a decision on giving to the church. I think tithing is a reasonable example, but for some of you, you are called to give a lot more than 10%. You shouldn't be legalistic about tithing because it's not about the 10%; it's about how you spend 100%.

Gifts and Talents. Many of us have gifts. Some of us are really smart. Some can sing. Some can build stuff. Some can organize. Some can teach. Some can help.

Whatever they are, all of these talents that you have are not yours. They are God's. You have been entrusted with them for God's purposes. How are you going to use the God given gifts for God in your life?

This includes your occupation as well? How are you going to use your profession for others? If you are running a business, you need to think about how you are going to operate the business for God. I never read it, but my brother talks about how God is his CEO. It's not just creating an opportunity to share the gospel with them. It's how we create human dignity and respect at the work place, how we create a culture of caring for one another, how to pay a reasonable wage.

If you are working for someone, you need to think of your work as if you are working for God. How would you work if you are working for God?

This also means that you have a boss above your boss that you are working for. When I just started to practice law, I worked for a firm that represented DirecTV in their programming contract. So, my supervising attorney would negotiate programming contracts with content providers, and I would make the rest of the contract consistent with the changes made. Since I was getting familiar with these telecommunication contracts, my supervisor gave me a Playboy channel contract to work on where we represented Playboy. I struggled with this. I decided that I couldn't represent Playboy TV; and I told me supervisor. The contract negotiation was happening around Christmas time and there weren't other attorneys who can work on the deal. So, I told him that I would work on it until someone else was available but that I couldn't work on it anymore. He was offended by it and just said I didn't have to work on it anymore. It was a tough decision and it didn't help my career but I felt that I had a boss above him.

Relationships. Whether it is your dating relationship or marriage relationship or even father/son relationship, you have to understand that you are a steward of that relationship. For example, God has given you your children to care for them and raise them, but they are not yours. They are God's children. At one point in your life, you have to let them go.

Even your spouse, she is not yours. She belongs to God ultimately. If you try to own her, you will stifle her. Your job is to love her and care for her, and not own her.

Health and Body. They both belong to God. The Bible says that the body is the temple of Holy Spirit. You don't use your body like it is your body. I am going to do anything I want with my body. You are called to be caretaker of your body for God. You need to exercise. You need to eat right kind of food. You need avoid lust. You need to keep it clean. You do this because it's not yours, but God's.

Environment. The world is not ours to just waste away. We are stewards of the earth. God gave us the responsibility of managing it and caring for it.

Do you see how important it is to be a steward of things that God has entrusted us? The moment we take the things that God has entrusted to us and start saying, MINE, is the moment that we start revolting against God.

In many ways, the origin of most of our sins is taking what belongs to God and saying it's MINE. That's what idolatry is. It's taking good things and making them into ultimate things. Time, life, health, body, career, possession, money are good things. But, if you make them you ultimate things, then, you have created an idol for yourself and rejected Jesus Christ as your Lord.

## **II. Where do we get the power to live like this?**

First, we have to realize that there are consequences to taking over God's things. There are natural consequences. When we claim ownership of these things, what happens is that they start owning us and enslaving us. When you say, this is MY money or MY time or MY stuff, and I can do whatever I want with it. You become selfish and self-engaged, and that will ultimate lead to self enslavement. You will not find peace and joy in your life as long as you hold on to your stuff so tightly. Things might happen where you lose it, and it's going to destroy you. If you held on to it on loan from God, even if it goes away, it's not going to destroy you. It might make you sad for a time, but it's not going to destroy you because you didn't build you foundation on it.

There are also ultimate consequences from God. There is final accounting. What will the owner of the vineyard do? There will be killed and the vineyard will be given to others. We might think there is no consequence to our idolatry, to our adverse possession of God's things, but the Scripture today is clear: there is judgment. There is final justice.

Second, we have to look to the cornerstone that the builders rejected and make it the cornerstone of our lives. They've rejected Jesus, the Son, but this death, the rejection of Jesus, became the cornerstone of a new vineyard. You see what Jesus is saying is that I will be killed, but my death will lay a new foundation for a new way to have a relationship with God. The cross of Jesus Christ is the foundation for a new vineyard.

What does it mean that the cross is the foundation for a new vineyard?

Two things:

First, it means that we come to this vineyard not based on our own efforts, but based on what he did on the cross. He died for us to forgive us of our idolatry. He took the penalty for our sins. He took the consequences of our sins. He gave himself the punishment I deserved to take.

Second, the cross also frees you from your idols.

You see the only way to let go of the idols in your life, the only way to open your palm and let go of the things that you are holding on to as if your life depended on it, as if you get life from somewhere other than your idol. The reason you can't let go of your money is because you get your self-value from it. You get your self-worth from it. You get your security from it. You see, we all need to be valued, we all need to be feel worth, we all need security. So, we hold on to it. But, when you get your security from God through the cross of Jesus Christ, and make that your foundation, then, you will be able to let go. Because Jesus died for your sins and gave us his worth, value, and security and BEAUTY upon us, we don't have to seek that by the idols of our lives.

When you make the BEAUTY that Jesus gives you (that he accepts you and values you and loves you and finds beauty in you based not on what you have done but based on his grace, by what Jesus has done on the cross for your sins), when you make

the beauty of Jesus the foundation of your life, then you will let go and let God be the authority over everything in your life.