

“Authorized by Jesus: to go!”

**Scripture: Matthew 21:23-32**

Graphic: all access pass, restricted area,

Key Verses: Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you.

Theme: Through Jesus, we are given a full access pass to the kingdom of God. With that, comes great responsibility...to love, to give, to live, to bear fruit, to come, and to go!

**1) Introduction**

- a) This morning, we are diving into a new sermon series from the gospel of Matthew entitled “Authorized by Jesus.”
- b) In our lives, we’re authorized to do lots of stuff – like take money out of the bank...or authorized to use a credit card. Some people might be authorized to use deadly force when necessary...or authorized to speak on behalf of an organization they lead. You might even be authorized to go into an area restricted from other people.
- c) But authorization to DO something is not self-given. It comes from some other entity, which has a higher level of authority than YOU do. The BANK tells you that you can withdraw money. The government tells a police officer she can use deadly force. The company has set you up in a position to speak for them. This comes from somewhere other than inside of you!
- d) Authority, according to dictionary.com, is the *power to determine, adjudicate, or otherwise settle issues or disputes; or the right to control, command, or determine.*
- e) Authority is power...given to someone from someone else who has more OF IT than they do, right?
- f) Revelation 12:10-11 gives us a picture of the divine authority that is bestowed on Jesus: “Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, proclaiming, “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Messiah, for the accuser of our comrades has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. But they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not cling to life even in the face of death.”
- g) Jesus Christ has been given the authority to determine or control the outcome of – not just circumstances and events in THIS life – but of the entire world! He has the power to settle it once and for all!
- h) Everyone OK with Jesus settling it?
- i) The power to defeat evil and sin, and the power to establish order in the world through righteousness and holiness – this is what Jesus is authorized to DO. And he will!
- j) As followers of Jesus, we get an all access pass...not to just go to heaven and be with Jesus...but because of Jesus, you have been given the authority to go out into the world, to love other people, to give to the work of the kingdom, to come to the table for renewal, to bear fruit, and to live to advance the kingdom of God...to bring other people into the kingdom.

- k) We are given authority to follow Jesus as King because Jesus has the authority to be the King. He earned it...we get to respond TO it.
- l) Over the next five weeks, we will look to Jesus to understand what His authority means in OUR lives.
- m) Turn with me in your bibles to the gospel of Matthew, the first book in the New Testament...
- n) Let's pray...

## 2) Scripture

### a) Read verse 23

- i) This is actually the second time in Matthew's gospel that Jesus entered the Temple with authority. The first time is when he had JUST arrived back in Jerusalem...and he goes to the Temple to (let me pick a relevant term): kick some butt.
- ii) Verse 12 – “Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you are making it a den of robbers." The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he cured them. (authority) But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the amazing things that he did, and heard the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they became angry and said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise for yourself'?"
- iii) The chief priests and the scribes were confused by Jesus. This is not something that happens in the Temple, man! You don't just walk in here and started kicking people out! Who ARE you?!?!
- iv) They totally didn't get it because they thought THEY were in charge. Sometimes, we misunderstand or over-inflate our own authority, don't we?
- v) The only access badge I own is one that I was issued by the hospital. Every once in a while, I get to flash my badge that says “CLERGY” on it... it allows me go past the security desk without questions... and for a minute I feel pretty important as I walk down the hall to whatever room I'm visiting....
- vi) That is, until I see someone, who obviously works at the hospital, walk up to a door with a card reader, swipe THEIR badge and the door opens up like some magic wand. I'm get so jealous! I always wonder what would happen if I were to, like, slide over to the door and swipe my card. Just my luck, some alarm would go off and they'd take my badge away.
- vii) If you're Jesus, though, sometimes authority is misunderstood by those around you...
- viii) The people who thought they were in charge of the teaching in the Temple misunderstood their own authority (they made it more than it was) and, that caused them to misunderstand Jesus' authority.

- ix) And by the time Jesus comes back to the Temple to teach, the people who THOUGHT they were in authority were getting pretty ticked off because Jesus was walking in and swiping his card and doing stuff that THEY thought he shouldn't be DOING. "We have protocols...we have laws...and now YOU are coming in here and teaching people without the proper credentials."
- x) And so, they ask him two questions..."By WHAT authority do you do this...and WHO GAVE you the authority?"
- xi) Now, the religious leaders had every right to ask...they were in charge!
- xii) Two questions...and in true Jewish Rabbi tradition, Jesus responds to their questions with another question. ...verse 24...

**b) Read verses 24-27**

- i) Rabbis in Jesus' time would ask a second question to respond to an initial question so that the person that offered the original question would be forced to answer their own question. Got that?
- ii) So, instead of just telling the chief priests that God had given him the authority, he asked a question about John's baptism.
- iii) Seems odd, but listen here...as we saw last week in worship, baptism is important God work...and the statement we make at baptism is that it's God's doing...remember Paul said that? It's about what God is doing in the life of the person being baptized...
- iv) So here's Jesus asking whether or not John's baptism was from heaven or from humans? It's a matter of authority...
- v) The chief priests start to argue...they're way too smart to simply answer the question like they wanted to...and, we read, they were sort of swayed by the crowd.
- vi) So here they are in the corner, "If we say, heaven, Jesus will say, well, then we didn't you believe it?" "If we say, human, then the crowd, who is quite large and thinks John is a prophet, will revolt!" The proverbial rock and a hard place, right?
- vii) And then, in a moment of profound stupidity, Rabbi Phil in the corner comes up with a brilliant idea! Hey...let's say, "We don't know!" "That'll trap him!"
- viii) And so, because they didn't answer Jesus' ONE question, Jesus doesn't have to answer THEIR two questions.
- ix) But for us, reading this 2,000 years later, we know the answer to ALL three questions.
- x) I mean, the right answer to Jesus' question, was also the right answer to BOTH of the chief priest's questions. The baptism of John, the authority Jesus had to do these things, and who it was that gave Jesus that authority to DO them are all answered the same – God did it! (Say, God did it). It's by God's authority. It's something God does...

- xi) And we have to stop doubting what God does and start living in the confidence that God can and will work through each one of us. And I say that primarily to myself, because I struggle at times feeling confident that what I do for Him matters.
- xii) If we are like the religious leaders and say “I don’t know” ... “I don’t know” that the authority of Jesus is of God, OR if we’re in the crowd and haven’t really yet made up our minds, OR if we can’t believe or accept Jesus’ divine authority, then that authority can never be passed on to us to make a difference in the world for Jesus.
- xiii) It takes faith...it takes a willingness to let go of some of the things that we love to control. The chief priests and elders wanted to have the authority...they liked it...they needed it to justify who they were and what they did. Without it, they were lost.
- xiv) We hold on so tightly to the reins of our control over the circumstances and situations in our lives, don’t we? We fail to allow the Holy Spirit to convince us of our sin, our direction, our relationship with God. We fail to believe that we are saved by God’s grace...
- xv) Jesus goes on to tell this parable...verse 28...

**c) Read verses 28-32**

- i) Jesus said, shockingly, that the TAX COLLECTORS and the PROSTITUTES are the ones who are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you, priests. They were the lowest form of humanity. Nasty sinners...unclean! The priests, represented by the second son, failed to acknowledge that what happened through John was God’s doing...they thought they were saying YES when they went out to hear John, but then said NO with their actions...
- ii) The sinners who repented, represented by the first son in the parable, did so when John came in the authority that God gave him. And they are the ones who have now changed their minds about their actions and have the all access pass to the kingdom of God.
- iii) The parable that Jesus presents is about choices! Each son had two choices. The first choice was to say Yes or No. I will go...I won’t go.
- iv) The second choice was to actually do what each said he would.
- v) Each of us has a choice based on what we believe to be the authority of God in our lives. If we say we believe, but our actions speak differently, then what we have done is make a mockery of the authority of Jesus. It’s usually because of pride, control issues, or simply that we think we can do a better job...
- vi) What God despises from His people is when we say we will do something that He has gifted us to do, but never get around to doing it. We get stuck... we want to do what God is calling us to do, we can, but we let the stuff of life get in the way...to distract us and keep us stuck.
- vii) But, and here’s the point of the parable, if we come as sinners, acknowledging that we have brokenness, doubt, baggage...and we lay that at the feet of Jesus because He’s the only one that has

been given the authority to determine or control the outcome of the entire world, then we enter into the kingdom of God.

### 3) Applications

- i) At that point, we might be tempted to sit back and watch Jesus just do His thing, thinking that we are sitting in some football game or some concert watching this drama unfold. You go get 'em Jesus!
- ii) The problem with that is if we're sitting in the stands, we're never going to really be able to participate in the outcome. As much as we would like to think that the louder we shout from the stands at the team on the field, we're never going to make a difference.
- iii) The only way to be able to make a difference is to get to the field...to get to the stage...to get into the arena and do what we've been gifted to do, whatever that is.
- iv) But you can't just walk onto the field...people get gang tackled by security guards (who HAVE the AUTHORITY to DO that to you).
- v) Unless you have been given authority...you can't access the restricted areas. With Jesus' authority in our lives comes our authority to work for him and through him to love others.
- vi) We become authorized personnel for Jesus to go out in His name...we get to walk right past the gate that the devil puts up that says, "You aren't allowed to go here" and we flash our badge and we GO...because Jesus told us to Go...

### 4) Conclusion

- a) I mentioned that the only badge I own is one that I was issued by the hospital. And every once in a while, for a minute, I feel pretty important...
- b) That is until I walk into the room of a person who is in intensive care...or who is afraid because of an impending surgery, or who has just a few days to live. These are real people who need Jesus' power to determine the outcome of their life.
- c) It's at that moment that I look down at my badge that gets me into the hospital without many questions, and begin to remember that the real authority I have at that moment doesn't come from a piece of plastic, but comes from my relationship to Jesus and my calling as a pastor.
- d) Each one of us has people in our lives that need Jesus. We are being given the opportunity to embrace the authority that comes when Jesus takes first place in our lives. Each one of us, then, has the choice to go out in Jesus' name...
- e) Next week, we will learn what it means to be authorized to bear fruit for the kingdom of God.
- f) Let's pray...