By What Authority

Luke 20:1-8

Key Verse 20:2

““Tell us by what authority you are doing these things,” they said. “Who gave you

this authority?”

Last Sunday message shows Jesus entered Jerusalem as the promised King, riding on a colt. People praised king as ‘blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord’ “peace in heaven and glory in the highest.” Jesus went to the temple and drove out those who were selling. He told them, “My house will be a house of prayer but you have made it a den of robbers.” And he taught them. The religious leaders were so upset because they were the one who established market there and share profit. So they wanted to kill Jesus but they could not do so because people hung on Jesus’ words.

Today’s passage is the continuation from the last Sunday’s message. When they could not kill Jesus they challenged Jesus’ authority.

So today we would like see the reason why the religious leaders became like this, and what kind of authority Jesus has.

My message have two parts. Part I. Tell us. (v.1-2) Part II. Neither will I tell you. (v.3-8) Part I shows authority to teach the word of God and the authority to proclaim the good news. Part II shows Jesus’ authority to love his enemies.

**Part I. Tell us (v.1-2)**

Look at verses 1-2.

**“One day as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple courts and proclaiming the good news, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, together with the elders, came up to him. 2“Tell us by what authority you are doing these things,” they said. “Who gave you this authority?”**

Here the verse one shows Jesus’ authority.

First, Jesus has authority to teach. There are many teachers sent by God, but Jesus is the one Teacher. In fact, Jesus is the one who sent all other teachers to his people.

**Matthew 23:8**

**“But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers.”**

Jesus has the authority to teach. He has authority to teach the word of God. Whatever he says is the word of God because he is God.

The word of God has so many blessings for us. They open our spiritual eyes and saves us from the power of sin and death. In addition it also gives refreshment of our soul, wisdom, joy, and light.

**Psalm 19:7-8**

**“7The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. 8The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes.”**

What can refresh our soul? The word of God. What can make us wise when we need God’s wisdom to solve so many problems. The word of God. Who can give us joy to the heart? Sometimes we seek joy to our hearts so much that we ended seeking joy from pleasures of sin. Then our hearts is filled with shame, fear, and guilt instead of joy. But the word of God gives joy to our heart.

It also gives light to our eyes. It means we can see spiritual truth clearly. We can discern what is going on in spiritual world clearly. We can see our own plant instead of sawdust from others’ eyes.

Secondly, Jesus has authority to proclaim the good news. The good news probably refers to the kingdom of God. Jesus has the most authority to proclaim the kingdom of God because he knows the kingdom of God completely.

We are surrounded by all kinds of bad news. If we look at newspapers or watch news we probably see troubles and bad news far more than good news. We need good news all the more. And Jesus has the authority to proclaim the good news, the kingdom of God, the Lord’s reigning.

Throughout his life time Jesus revealed his authority through miracles and many teachings.

For example,

**Luke 5:20-25**

**20When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.” 21The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” 22Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? 23Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? 24But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” 25Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God.**

Here Jesus clearly revealed that he is God on earth. He has authority on earth to forgive sins to the Pharisees and the teachers of the law.

But the chief priests and the teachers of the law and elders came and asked, “

**“Tell us by what authority you are doing these things,” they said. “Who gave you this authority?”**

How did Jesus answer them?

**Part II. Neither will I tell you. (v.3-8)**

Look at verses 3-8.

**3He replied, “I will also ask you a question. Tell me: 4John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin?” 5They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Why didn’t you believe him?’ 6But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ all the people will stone us, because they are persuaded that John was a prophet.” 7So they answered, “We don’t know where it was from.” 8Jesus said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”**

Jesus did not answer their question. Why didn’t he answer their question? It is because giving them the correct answer would not help them at all. What could be the correct answer? The correct answer would be “By the authority of God”. But they had already judged that Jesus did not have such authority. So even if Jesus said so they would not believe. So Jesus had to find a better way to help them.

Then Jesus asked them. **“I will also ask you a question. Tell me: 4John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin?”**

They discussed the answer among them. They said, **“If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Why didn’t you believe him?’ 6But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ all the people will stone us, because they are persuaded that John was a prophet.”** So they answered, “**“We don’t know where it was from.”**

This is one classic example of how people can deceive themselves when they do not want to repent. It shows how our minds can deceive us when we are not ready to see our own fault and repent.

The chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders, did not believe John. It was because they did not want to repent. John’s baptism was the baptism of repentance. So to believe John means to repent.

When they were not willing to repent their minds began to find millions of excuses to justify themselves. “Oh, John never performed any miracles to prove that he is a prophet. Oh, crowds go to him because they did not have proper biblical knowledge like us. Oh, finally God exposed the truth that he is not a prophet because his popularity is rapidly decreasing after Jesus of Nazareth began to baptize.”

But they could not say publically ‘John’s baptism was of human origin’ because they were afraid to be stoned by all the people who were already convinced that John was a prophet.

All other people who were not religious leaders could see clearly John was a prophet and his baptism came from God.

But why couldn’t religious leaders, the chief priest, the teachers of the law, and the elders who had such biblical knowledge see the truth? Why couldn’t they see such a plain truth which all ordinary people could see so clearly? It is because they did not want to repent. When they did not want to repent they could find many excuses to justify themselves. Indeed their hearts was deceitful.

**Jeremiah 17:9**

**“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”**

Our hearts generates all kinds of excuses not to repent. So those people who have defects could not see their defects and live happily without any sense of problem. But the problem is they do not grow and they are not healed. They live as crippled men.

Many people could see his problems clearly. But only he could not see it. It is because his mind finds millions of excuses to justify himself. If someone tries to help him he will come up with many excuses such as “Oh, you don’t understand me” and would not accept what others say to him.

We have all kinds of self deception and self denial for all the things we need to repent. Whatever we do not like to repent, we can find millions of excuses to justify ourselves and hide ourselves behind them and we feel we are fine. But the problem is we do not be healed. We do not grow. The more serious weaknesses we have the more we have excuses, reasons to justify ourselves.

Our enemies hide behind our denial and self deception and grow and excise its power more.

In Long Beach center, one person who was fully drunk came to center, main hall. I told him, “you are drunk”. Do you know what he told me? “No, I am not. You are wrong.”

It is all known fact in a mental illness we can recognize something is wrong when we are little bit sick. But when we pass certain stage and becomes sick more then we begin to say “I am okay. You are wrong.”

When they answered, “We don’t know where it was from.” Jesus said, “**“Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”**

By doing so, Jesus revealed his wisdom from God. At the same time he responded this way so that they could see their self deception. When they deceived themselves they could go nowhere. They could not get any new learning. They were just stuck in their own authority and knowledge.

By asking another question Jesus revealed their core problem. Their problem is unbelieving.

What Jesus did toward the religious leaders reminds us of 2 Timothy 2:24-26.

**2 Timothy 2:24-26.**

**“24And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. 25Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,26and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.”**

It was only a few days left before Jesus was crucified. So he could be very nervous and stressful. So Jesus could be very angry at those who opposed him without any reason. But he was still gentle and kind. His authority was revealed to help the religious leaders to find their own darkness. His authority was revealed to help them to see the light of God.

Jesus’ authority and power is not military one. It is not political one. It is a spiritual one. It is the power and authority to love his enemies.

**Luke 6:27-31**

**27“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. 30Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. 31Do to others as you would have them do to you.”**

Few days ago, I had to make one of the most important decisions for two people. I had my own thoughts and ideas. But I wanted to follow the Lord’s plans and his will and his heart based on his words.

Then he gave me this word, “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” The command of the Lord refreshed my soul. It gave me the wisdom from God. And it gave me joy in my heart and it gives light to my eyes. I could see the will of God very clearly.

So I obeyed the word of God’s command. Then I was so joyful and happy because the word of God gave me joy to my heart and light to my eyes and it refreshed my soul. Surely Jesus’ authority is the authority and power to love his enemies.

In sum, today we learned Jesus’ authority – to teach the word of God, to proclaim the good news, and the power and authority to love his enemies and gently instruct.

One word: By what authority.