

Swine Principles

Live Like You Were Dying: The Gospel of Mark Chapters 11-16: #3

Mark 11:27-12:12

Do not give dogs what is sacred. Do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

I still remember the chair vividly. It was a beige Lay-Z-Boy with deep pockets on each side. On one side, my dad kept the TV Guide and the remote control for his Zenith. On the other side, he kept his well-worn copy of Ken Follet's novel *The Eye of the Needle* and the most recent copy of the *Spartanburg Herald Journal*. From that beige Lay-Z-Boy, my father issued decrees to his children while keeping his seat that we were wise to follow: "Quit playing that Staying Alive song." "Quit dancing to that Staying Alive song." And my favorite: "Don't put aluminum foil in the microwave."

Jesus never spoke decrees authoritatively from a Lay-Z-Boy. But He did from a mountain: "Do not judge, or you too will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." "If someone smites you on one cheek, turn and give him the other cheek also." He gave north of 70 commands in that famous Sermon on the Mount, two of which we are going to see Jesus model on this Passion Tuesday. But they are not ones we think about often. But Jesus did, especially when he returned to the very spot that he just cleansed the day before and the chief priests, teachers of the law, and elders tried to trap him because the whip marks on their posteriors were still fresh. Those two commands are these: "Do not give dogs what is sacred. Do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces."

Friend, there is a reason you spin your wheels in no-win situations with good intentions but still find yourself stuck in the mud. There is a reason you engage in a discussion in an effort to try to convince someone of your prospective and disengage in a place worse than where you started. There is a reason you enter into conflict with the Spirit of the Lord saying to you in a still small voice "don't engage," and leave that battlefield with the Spirit of the Lord saying to you in that still small voice: "I tried to tell you." That reason is this: You've not taken seriously the Lord's command not to give to dogs what is sacred and throw your pearls to swine as seriously as Jesus did on that Tuesday before his Friday crucifixion and Sunday resurrection. There are some people in life who are going to be hostile to everything you stand for and do, regardless of what you say.

So, when you have those encounters, and you might even have one this week, it's best to remember the principles that Jesus modeled on the Tuesday before his death and put them into practice when those who were hostile in mind and engaged in evil deeds tried to trap him. They are found in Mark 11:27-33. I call them the Swine Principles. They concern how to guard what is sacred without it being trampled upon. They are as follows: (1) *It Takes Spiritual Wisdom to Spot a Trap.* (2) *People Hostile to the Things of God Know They Are.* (3) *God's Purposes and Our Participation in Them Cannot Be Thwarted by Evil.* (4) *Loving Jesus and Keeping His Commands Will Not Earn You Any Favors with the World.* The Swine Principles will never change. They were true for Jesus, and they are true for you and me. So, turn with me to Mark 11:27-33. We'll read as we go.

1. It Takes Spiritual Wisdom to Spot a Trap (11:27-33)

- ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you authority to do this?" ²⁹ Jesus replied, "I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. ³⁰ John's baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!" ³¹ They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?'" ³² But if we say, 'Of human origin' . . ." (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.) ³³ So they answered Jesus, "We don't know." Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."
- **The Difference Between Wisdom and Knowledge:** (1) Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit. It comes from knowing that tomatoes have seeds and grow from the flower of the plant. Wisdom, however, is knowing not to put tomatoes in a fruit salad. (2) Protecting what is sacred so that it isn't trampled upon requires not just knowledge. It requires wisdom. And Jesus exercised plenty of it dealing with the same people he had just chased out of the temple.
- **The Trick Explained:** Notice these individuals ask Jesus "by what authority he's doing these things?" They didn't question the validity of what he did the day before. They wanted to know by whose authority. Jesus has presented himself as having authority in the Gospel of Mark and it hasn't gone unnoticed: (1) he teaches with authority (1:22); (2) he exorcises evil spirits with authority (1:27); (3) He even said, "the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins" (2:10). They ask him this to trap him: if he says, "by my Father's authority," then they would have expedited the crucifixion process before it was time.
- **The Wise Response of Jesus and Their Answer:** "Was John's baptism from heaven or human origin?" Why did he give this answer? (1) John was the forerunner of Jesus who announced his arrival. If these individuals can't accept John as a prophet, how will they accept Jesus. (2) He's not evading their question. He's guarding what is sacred until the moment he willingly surrenders his life. But that moment hasn't come. Not Yet. (3) They are unwilling to acknowledge that John was sent from God but neither will they acknowledge him outright because they were afraid of the people. So, they lie and say, "we don't know."
- **App:** It takes wisdom to know that when someone is hostile to the Gospel and/or everything you are about, nothing you can say or do will help them to see things they do not want to see. That's why you don't surrender to dogs what is sacred and cast pearls among swine.

2. People Hostile to the Things of God Know They Are (12:1-8)

- *Jesus 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 moved to another place.² At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard.³ But they seized him, beat him, and sent him away empty-handed.⁴ Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully.⁵ He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed.⁶ "He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, 'They will respect my son.'⁷ "But the tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.'⁸ So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.*
- **Asking a Child Why They Did Something:** When you ask a child why he did something and he responds with "I don't know" or "I didn't mean to," that child knows exactly why he did something and meant to do it. Equally, people hostile to things of God know they are.
- **Jesus Wants These Individuals to Know That They Are Hostile So He Continues with a Parable:** (1) Some of Jesus' parables are hard to understand. This isn't one of those. It's the Parable of the Tenants, where the images stand in the place of something: (a) the vineyard (Israel), (b) What the man who planted the vineyard did for it (Love of God for Israel); (c) Servants (the prophets he sent), (d) the Son (Jesus); (e) the Tenants (the individuals he's talking to)
- **The Parable Explained:** (1) God planted a vineyard that was Israel. (2) He loved them and took care of them. (3) But when he sent his servants, the prophet, to inspect the fruit of the vineyard, they beat some of them and killed others. (4) So, the owner sent his heir hoping they would listen to him. They knew he was his heir too! But they killed him thinking that if they did, what belonged to Him would belong to them. (5) And none of this came about through ignorance. They knew what they were doing. They didn't want the Owner's vineyard. They wanted their own. That's why people are hostile to the Gospel and will be to you who stand for the things of God.
- **App:** When people are hostile to the Gospel or you, it's not your job to stand and plead with them why they shouldn't be. But it is your job to shake the dust off your feet in order to protect what is sacred in you, just like Jesus is about to do.

3. God's Purposes and Our Participation in Them Cannot be Thwarted by Evil (12:9-11)

- ⁹ *"What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.¹⁰ Haven't you read this passage of Scripture: "'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;¹¹ the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"*
- **In Christ Alone:** (1) There is a song we sing that will be sung in churches until Jesus returns. The last lines of which read "no power of hell. No scheme of man. Can ever pluck me from his hand. Till He returns or calls me home. Here, in the power of Christ I'll stand.
- **Jesus Ends the Parable with a Simple Message: No Evil Can Thwart God's Purposes:** (1) But how he explains why it cannot is the best part of the parable: (a) He concludes in a way they don't expect: The original parable of the vineyard came via Isaiah. In that parable, when the vineyard didn't produce the intended fruit, the vineyard was going destroyed by foreign invaders. But here the vineyard isn't destroyed. It's the wicked tenants that are. And the vineyard will produce the intended fruit through others: the disciples and the disciples of the disciples (you and me), not the chief priests, scribes, and teachers of the law. (2) And puts an exclamation mark on it with a Psalm quoted two days before: It is Psalm 118. Verse 25-26 read: Lord, save us! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. But the verse the crowds neglected to quote, now Jesus quotes: "the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."
- **App:** Oh, the body of Christ, what a miracle. In spite of all the quirks, the problems, and in spite of all the attempts to vanquish it, the ecclesia of God still lives on. Why? No evil can thwart the work of God and our role in it. Thanks be to God he's entrusted to us his vineyard. Let us bear the fear for which Christ the cornerstone intended.

4. Loving Jesus and Keeping His Commandments Will Not Earn You Any Favors with the World (12:12)

- ¹² *Then the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders 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.*
- **Our Center of the Mark vs the World's:** Loving God, loving people, and keeping his commandments may be the center of the mark for our lives, but we run into all kinds of issues when we assume that the world has the same values. It does not. Therefore, don't expect it's applause.
- **Jesus Has Done Three Very Important Things in This Passage before These Hearers:** (1) He's connected his divine authority to the same authority of John the Baptist by implication. But no applause. (2) He told those who were hostile to the Gospel why they are hostile via a parable. No applause. (3) And he's told them the capstone the builders rejected is the chief cornerstone, whether they liked it or not. No applause.
- **Instead, We Get This:** "the teachers of the law and the elders looked for a way to arrest him."
- **App:** And arresting Jesus, putting him on a cross, and rising again is exactly what had to happen in order for us, His Bride, to have the privilege of exercising wisdom how not to surrender what is sacred; how not to cast your precious pearls among the swine. Jesus not only preached that metaphor. He modeled it. Loving God and keeping His commands doesn't earn us any favor with the world. But it does receive the applause of heaven. Amen. Thine the Glory.