

Lake Cities Community Church  
September 6, 2009  
Pastor Craig Schill  
Series: On Your Mark!

**“I’m Against It”**  
Mark 11:27 – 12:34

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My family will tell you that I am a big Mark Brother’s fan – that family of comedians who made movies in the 1930s and 40s. The most famous Marx brother of course was Groucho. His real name was Julius, but he took the name Groucho as it reflected his grouchy disposition. In the 1932 movie Horse Feathers, his song “I’m against it” captures his personality. It goes: “I don’t know what they have to say, it makes no difference anyway, whatever it is, and I’m against it. No matter what it is or who commenced it, I’m against it! Your proposition may be good, but let’s have one thing understood, Whatever it is, I’m against it. And even when you’ve changed it or condensed it, I’m against it.” Groucho was the classic contrarian!

That song came to my mind as I read today’s passage. “I’m against it” could easily be Jesus’ theme song in chapters 11-12. If you recall, we are at the point in the narrative that Jesus’ low profile is gone and he is in a period of open confrontation (such as we saw in the cleansing of the Temple). That continues with a string of seven confrontations, one after another with the leaders of Israel. We will look at five of those confrontations today. The question I want us to ask is, “What is Jesus against?” If Jesus said, “I’m against \_\_\_\_\_”. What would his answer be? Think about that as we look at our text:

## Story #1 - Authority 11:27-33

The first conflict is in verses 27-33 of chapter 11. After the incident of Jesus cleansing temple, members of the Sanhedrin, Israel's highest ruling body decide to conduct an investigation and ask Jesus: [Mark 11:28](#) "By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things?" If you have ever done an investigation – you can understand their position. But they are not unbiased investigators – we know they are seeking Christ's death. Jesus does not answer their question but instead asks them about the baptism of John (v30) – was it from heaven or from man? And they consider, Verse 31: "They *began* reasoning among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Then why did you not believe him?' [Mark 11:32](#) "But shall we say, 'From men?'" — they were afraid of the people, for everyone considered John to have been a real prophet. Two observations. First they are classic politicians with their finger in the air to see which way the wind is blowing. Second, their hidden agenda is exposed because the question of authority has already been answered in the ministry of John the Baptist. But they can't acknowledge that, so (v.33) they say, "We don't know." And Jesus responds, "nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

There is much more that could be said about this passage, but I want you to sense is Jesus' resistance to them. He doesn't answer their question. He sidesteps their plan. He does not say graciously: "Men of Israel, listen! All authority is given to me by my Father as it was announced & revealed by John. Repent. Have faith in me!" There is no such appeal, or exhortation. Why? Why is Jesus so against them?

## Story #2: Judgment 12:1-12

The second passage is in chapter 12, verses 1-12. Still speaking to the Sanhedrin. Jesus tells about a man who planted a vineyard, put it into the hands of hired workers and went away. At harvest time, he sends his slaves to receive his harvest, but the greedy workers beat-up and then kill the owner's representatives. Then verse six: [Mark 12:6](#) "He had one more *to send*, a beloved son; he sent him last *of all* to them, saying, "They will respect my son." [Mark 12:7](#) "But those vine-growers said to one another, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!" [Mark 12:8](#) "They took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. This is Jesus' fourth prediction of His death. To His disciples his death prediction always ended with hope that three days later, He would rise again. But to these people Jesus says: [Mark 12:9](#) "What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others.... Jesus looks these Elders and chief Priests in the eyes and says, "God will destroy you. What you have now will be taken from you." There are no words of hope in this parable; and verse 12... *they understood that He spoke the parable against them.* Why? Why so hard? Why such a strong opposition?

## #3 Poll Tax (12:13-17)

The third story is in verses 13-17. The Pharisees and Herodians now come to Christ. The Herodians were Jews who supported the King Herod's dynasty – they wanted to keep things the way they were. They would have supported the taxation system that kept the government funded. They come with seemingly gracious words, verse 14: [Mark 12:14](#) "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not? Have you

ever had someone speak to you in such a sweet voice, and then turn around and stab you in the back? But Jesus is not deceived. Verse 15: **But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why are you testing Me? Bring Me a denarius to look at." Mark 12:16 They brought one. And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" And they said to Him, "Caesar's." Mark 12:17 And Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."**

Do you remember the swordsman in Raiders of the Lost Ark. This guy had his BIG sword and is sure that he has Indiana Jones defeated. But what does Jones have? A big gun. Big guns defeat big swords every day. The Herodians and Pharisees are likewise outgunned. They are confident in their trick question, but Jesus easily avoids their trap. And not only that - he turns their foolish question into a wise exhortation for us in the area of taxes. I imagine that the Pharisees and Herodians were left speechless and being embarrassed as they walked away.

#### **#4 False Doctrine (12:18-27)**

The fourth passage is in verses 18-27. This time the Sadducees come to Jesus. The Sadducees only believed to Moses' writings (Gen – Deuteronomy) and not the whole Old Testament. And since Moses doesn't talk about resurrection, they didn't believe in it! So they try to trap Jesus with a hypothetical question about a man whose brother's wife died. So, according to Old Testament law – he marries her to continue the family line. But he dies, and so his brother marries, and he dies and there are 7 brothers, and they each in marry this woman and then dies. How clever. The punch line is in verse 23: **"In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had married her."** It is like

that question, “Can God make a rock too big for Himself to move?” Ha ha – look at the clever question I have come up with.

Jesus will have no part of their games, verse 24: “**Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures or the power of God? [Mark 12:25](#)** “For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. [Mark 12:26](#) “But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the *passage* about *the burning bush*, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, and the God of Jacob’? (not, “I used to be...”) [Mark 12:27](#) “He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; you are **greatly mistaken.**” Jesus pegs them as poor theologians and false teachers, because even the Scripture they endorse teach the hope of resurrection. Jesus defeats them and sends them on their way!

### **What is Jesus Against?**

When our kids were little and we would on special occasions go to Chuck-e-Cheese where they would enjoy that educational game: “wack-a-mole.” The mole pops out and – wack- you knock it down! Jesus is playing wack-a-Chief Priest, wack-a-Pharisee, wack-a-Herodian and wack-a-Sadducee. They pop up and he knocks them back down. And I ask again. Why? All around Jesus, people are happy and joyful. It is the Passover feast – one of the greatest and most joyful feasts of the Jews. The temple is glorious, the sun is shining, the birds are singing. But Jesus is fighting, fighting, fighting... Why does Jesus in open opposition mode? Let me suggest four possibilities.

First, maybe he is **against sinners**. Maybe God just likes to “whack” evil people on the head. The people Jesus has confronted are all unbelievers, right? You bad person - “I am

against you. I am your worst nightmare!" Well... God does hate sin – that is true. But if we have seen anything in our study through Mark it is that most of the time Jesus is very gracious with sinners. After all, he hangs out with tax collectors and sinners. Time and again we have witnessed him welcoming those who come humbly, by faith. No - we have to reject this. Jesus may be against sin, but he is not against sinners as a general rule.

Maybe, then Jesus is against **organized religion**. After all is it the religious system Jesus attacks isn't it? This fits our culture. People say: "I love God, but can't stand the church." If Jesus was against organized religion - I can be too. I don't need the church - My Trinity is Me, Myself and I. But... No... that can't be right. After all God called Israel to Himself, and sent the law. He commanded the building of the Temple and the sacrifice of animals. The law was good and pleasing to God. And then later Jesus created the church, and set up offices of elders and deacons. It was organized from the start, by God! This too must be rejected. Jesus is not against the systematizing and structuring of faith.

If it is not religion or sinners, then it must be that Jesus is against **authority**. That must be it. Sinners who are poor and helpless are OK, but sinners in positions of authority are to be opposed. Weren't you taught that the poor people are good, and the Pharisees are bad? No, no no! This must also be rejected. That can't be the reason – look at the fifth passage, verses 28-34.

### **Story 5: Love Mark 12:28-34**

In this story Jesus interacts with a Scribe in a very different way. This Scribe, this religious authority figure, agrees with Jesus that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord with all ones heart and soul and strength, and to love one another. And that love is

more valued to God than burnt sacrifice. Jesus has encouraging words to him, verse 34: **He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."** I believe this story is included in Scripture so we don't make the mistake of believing that Jesus is against all religious leadership. This Scribe and Nicodemus are examples of leaders Jesus did not oppose, but encouraged.

### **Answer**

OK - are you ready for the answer? When it comes to determining the theology of Mark - sometimes we look to Peter. Peter is most likely the Disciple who informs Mark's gospel. I believe that what is happening here can be found in 1 Peter 5:5. **And all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.** Isn't that what we have been seeing? Jesus is against PRIDE. Those who are arrogant and prideful - He resists and opposes -- but He gives grace to the humble. **1Pet. 5:6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time.**

The Elders comes with their pride and authority and are opposed by Christ – the tax collectors and sinners come with humility and are accepted. The Herodians comes with their arrogance and are shamed by Jesus. The sick and dying come with simple faith and are blessed. The Sadducees comes with trick questions and are exposed, but the Scribe comes with honest questions and receives encouragement. God is opposed to the proud, but give grace to the humble. If we can learn this simple truth, it will revolutionize our faith. It is the key to spiritual progress.

Over the years we have had many older cars and you have to decide what you are going to fix, and what you are going to live with. Our Suburban is pushing 190,000 miles

and has a few problems that we choose live with. The bungee cord wrapped around the steering column keeps the hazard lights from coming on, because the switch broke. If the car doesn't start, it is probably the battery cable which is loose - but if you tap on it a few times you are usually on your way. The rear air doesn't work, but the front air works fine. These are not things we are not interested in getting fixed. But one time the parking break cable broke with the parking brake on. And that is something you have to get fixed. Because if you try to drive with the resistance of an engaged parking brake you will not go very far, and you will damage the care in the process.

That is exactly what happens if you don't fix the problem of pride you will make little progress in the Christian life. You will feel as if God is working against you - and indeed that may well be true. God opposes the proud. If you are stuck in your faith. If the pieces do not seem to be lining up for you. It may be that you have not dealt with your pride. If you come to him with your own agenda. If you try to trick God into doing what you want. If you arrogantly question God - "Why did you do that I deserve better!" You need to fix your pride, or you will never go far in your Christian life. Humble yourself. I tell you the truth that if any one of the characters we looked at today would have approached Christ in humility, they would have found grace instead of opposition. That is the way God works.

Deep within God's character even though He is the most powerful and mighty being in existence - God is humble. Father, Son and Holy Spirit submit to and love one another. Therefore it is within God's nature to oppose the proud and give grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under God's mighty hand, and He will lift you up.

**Psa. 10:17 O LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble;  
You will strengthen their heart, You will incline Your ear.**