

The 18th Sunday after Pentecost
“Jesus’ Almighty Authority”
Matthew 21:23
September 27, 2026
Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 18th Sunday after Pentecost is from our Gospel reading, Matthew 21:23.

“23 Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?”

So far our text:

“If you see something, say something.” Since 9/11, that’s a saying that is continually impressed upon our nation to help combat terrorism. If you see something that doesn’t seem right or suspicious, tell the authorities.

And so we often associate the word authority with bringing evil to justice, punishing evil, and maintaining order and peace in society. And that is certainly the God-given charge of local and national authorities who carry the power of the sword as we know from Romans 13, the epistle reading that we heard three weeks ago. I read it again to refresh our memories.

“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. 4 For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain;”

Throughout His ministry, Jesus acted with an authority that amazed the people which they had never seen before. For Jesus, the Son of God, acted with the authority that was

inherently His. Jesus drove out demons, healed the sick, calmed the sea, and taught with authority, not like the scribes.

And the elders and the chief priests saw something, and came to Jesus to say something. They came with unbelieving hearts. They did not see Jesus as God, refused to acknowledge Him, and plotted His destruction.

Our text takes place on Tuesday of Holy Week. This was Jesus last full day of teaching in the temple, of calling all people to repentance. And the chief priests saw something. They saw Jesus ride into Jerusalem to the praise of the people who sang “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, Hosannah in the highest.” They saw Jesus overturn the tables of the money changers a few verses before our text and say, **“‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’”**

They saw Jesus heal the sick and the blind that were brought to Him in the temple. And they had to say something to Jesus. **“By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?”** For they would not believe that Jesus authority was self-derived...that He was God in the flesh. And that was the big problem. That was their problem and the problem for all people.

Who is this authority named Jesus? And Jesus wants all people to believe and simply to answer, my Lord and my God...my Savior who has come to rescue me from all the authority that evil has over my soul, the devil, my sinful flesh and death itself. This is the single most important question for all people to answer correctly.

See something...see the greatest something...see what Jesus has done for you...His death on the cross and resurrection...and then say something, “I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Then you are saved by Jesus authority.

As John 1 says: **“12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:”**

The right, the power, the authority to believe in His name. It’s a God-given authority to the believer, same Greek word that the chief priests used, doubting His authority.

God wants all people to be saved by life-giving authority and takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked as we heard in our Old Testament reading from Ezekiel 18. So Jesus

challenges them with a question. To answer the question correctly shows that they are truly repentant and believing in Him.

24 But Jesus answered and said to them, “I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: 25 The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?”

The baptism of John gave repentant people forgiveness through their faith in Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. John, the forerunner of the Messiah, pointed to Jesus. If his baptism was from heaven, why didn't they believe in Jesus? If the Chief Priests said that it wasn't from heaven, well then, they feared the multitudes who regarded John as a true prophet from God. So, they said nothing.

See something, see the truth of the teaching of John the Baptist pointing to Jesus as the Son of God, but say nothing. That was their answer. And so the terrorism of the devil on their souls continued. And it continues on the souls of every person who does not confess Jesus as one's Savior.

Jesus sees that they need to hear more law. They need to be convicted. With authority Jesus tells them another parable...the parable of the two sons. Both are called by the father to go work in the vineyard. One says no, but later changes his mind. The other says yes, but doesn't go. Which did the will of the father?

It was an easy question that the chief priests could answer. The first. But then comes the authority of Jesus' words that He speaks to them.

“Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. 32 For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him.”

Jesus alone has the authority to give entrance into the kingdom of God. No one comes to the Father except by Me, the Way the Truth and the Life. And Jesus has authority to close the kingdom of heaven to all who would not believe in Him.

How powerful is Jesus' authority? The most wicked of repentant sinners are given entrance, and the hardened soul is excluded. Luke 12:5 warns us of God's authority to the unrepentant sinner.

"5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!"

But for the repentant sinner, we see God's authority to forgive sin and remove it completely. Remember the story of the paralytic in Matthew 9.

"When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.' 3 And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, 'This Man blasphemes!' 4 But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, 'Why do you think evil in your hearts? 5 For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'? 6 But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"—then He said to the paralytic, 'Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.' 7 And he arose and departed to his house."

And this is why Jesus came for us, for the whole world – to conquer the authority of sin by taking on sin Himself and becoming sin. By Jesus death and resurrection, He did that once and for all.

"17 'Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. 18 No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.'" (John 10:17-18)

And so, with authority He gives this blessed news to us in Word and Sacrament, that our sins are forgiven.

"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," (Matthew 28:18-19)

With authority Jesus has saved you through your baptism and continues to forgive your sins through the Lord's Supper, giving you His very body and blood that He willingly laid down for your life.

**“13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. 14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right (the authority) to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.”
(Revelation 22:13-14)**

What you have seen and heard is the Good News of Jesus authority over all evil, your evil included. He lovingly exercises His authority over you by forgiving all your sins through His shed blood, and gives you eternal life. And what do we say? “Yes, Lord I believe, that You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God”.

Amen.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)