

# ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

Sermon Series

## Bad Motives

Luke 20:1-8

### Preface

We are continuing with our Encounters With Jesus series.

### Scripture – Read

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

*<sup>3</sup> He replied, “I will also ask you a question. Tell me, <sup>4</sup> John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or from men?”*

*<sup>5</sup> They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Why didn’t you believe him?’ <sup>6</sup> But if we say, ‘From men,’ all the people will stone us, because they are persuaded that John was a prophet.”*

*<sup>7</sup> So they answered, “We don’t know where it was from.”*

*<sup>8</sup> Jesus said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.” Luke 20:1-8 NIV*

### Introduction

This past week the Governor of New York resigned in the midst of a prostitution scandal. Eliot Spitzer had a reputation as a corruption-fighting, straight as an arrow, tough Governor. He has disgraced his office and his family.

It turns out that while the Governor was speaking tough words of justice, he was at the same time involved in illegal activity.

We’ve all heard the term “actions speak louder than words.” Sometimes actions speak a whole different language than our words.

Sometimes people hide their motives behind false words and false questions. Bad motives always get exposed in God’s presence.

This encounter with Jesus comes on the heels of him cleansing the temple. This action clearly interfered with the priest’s income as Jesus ran out the sellers.

He had also been teaching in the temple and the crowd was following his teaching. Luke 19:47 tells us the exact motives behind the chief priests and religious leaders. “They desired to kill him.”

### Content

#### 1. We should evaluate our own motives

There are many lessons to be learned from this text. One lesson is that God’s house is no place for turf wars.

What was Jesus doing that was so bad? Verse 1 tells us he was teaching and preaching in the temple courts. But they came and asked, “By what authority do he do these things?”

The problem was that he was interfering with the priest’s little power house. The people were beginning to follow Christ and that made the priests and the Sanhedrin feel threatened.

They were accustomed to having plenty of power and influence and they felt threatened by the teachings of Jesus.

God’s house and among God’s people is no place for people to seek power and influence. People have always tried to wheel their influence and power in churches. There is no room for this type of activity in God’s work. It is destructive.

Illus: I have seen people leave the church or get mad for all sorts of silly reasons from the color of the new carpet to the design of the sign. It isn’t really about the carpet or the sign; it is about them not getting their way and having power.

The religious leaders were so focused on their power that they stood against Jesus himself. May we never let our personal desires stand in the way of the Lord’s work.

Some folks are so concerned about their power and influence in the church that they stand in the way of His work.

Another thing I want to point out is how they gathered up their little group to confront Jesus. Just because you have a group of people on your side, doesn't make you right.

## 2. Jesus Always Exposes Our Motives

Understand that their questions were in no way sincere. They were strictly designed to catch Jesus in a mistake that would allow them to discredit him.

Illus: I have been reading the local paper and clearly our city council and other leaders are at odds with one another. As you read the words of their meetings, they remind me of these people in our scripture; always trying to trip up each other.

The religious leaders really asked two questions. They were what authority he had and who gave him such authority.

Jesus responds with a question that takes them all the way back three years to John the Baptist. He asks them "By whose authority did John baptize?"

As the scripture tells us, this put them between a rock and a hard place. They never approved of John's baptism but they tolerated him because he was so popular among many people. Again, they did not want to risk jeopardizing their power.

There was no way they could be honest and say, by no authority and that they never approved of John's work.

On the other hand, if they acknowledged that John's work was under the authority of God, they would have to acknowledge the same authority for Jesus because of the message of John.

So they willingly played stupid and responded with a simple, "We do not know." When all else fails, play stupid.

Jesus exposed their real motives and their true hearts. Their hollow questions were not questions at all.

God's word always exposes our real motives. God's word is like a two edged sword that slices right to our hearts and exposes what we are really up to.

God's word exposes our sin.

God's word exposes our love for self and our love for power.

God's word exposes our unbelief.

We must go to God with sincere hearts and sincere questions. When we do so he is faithful to speak to us in spirit with assurances and strength.

## 3. His Authority Should Not Be Questioned

If you have the NIV bible, the heading above chapter 20:1 reads, "The Authority of Jesus Questioned."

Throughout the ages, the authority of Jesus has been questioned. There will always be those who question the authority of Jesus.

Atheists, Islam, Jews and other religions question the authority of Jesus.

Tom Cruise and his Scientology nonsense denounce the authority of Jesus.

Our government leaders and judges question his authority.

There will always be those who question the authority of Jesus. But may you and I never be in that group.

There will also always be those who recognize the authority of Jesus and submit to him as Lord of their life.

Before you say, "Oh I would never question the authority of Jesus," I want to ask you to think a moment."

Do you really trust his word? Do you strive to obey his word and live in accordance to his teachings? Or, do you rationalize when it comes to his word and draw your own conclusions to justify your own desires? You must be born again.

You and I must trust his authority and his word. We must search our hearts and rid ourselves of selfish rationalization.

### ➤ Conclusion

Illus: Have you ever driven around in your vehicle and pointed out to your passenger all of the missed opportunities? Have you ever pointed out a piece of property that you had an opportunity to purchase at a great deal but you didn't have enough foresight to make the purchase at the time?

These religious leaders had the Messiah; the Christ right in front of them and they missed it. They missed their opportunity to truly know the depth of God's love.

Of all the great questions they could have asked the living God, focused on themselves, they missed their opportunity.

Don't make that mistake.