

Mark 11:12-21

¹² Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry.¹³ And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ In response Jesus said to it, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again."

And His disciples heard *it*.

¹⁵ So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. ¹⁶ And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. ¹⁷ Then He taught, saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.' "

¹⁸ And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching. ¹⁹ When evening had come, He went out of the city.

²⁰ Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. ²¹ And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away."

1. This is the final week before the Cross

- a.** It's also Passover
- b.** The city is surging with people

2. Just yesterday, Jesus entered the city on a donkey and people sang Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD

3. This is the next morning

- a.** Jesus looks for fruit from the fig tree
- b.** He cleanses the temple for the 2nd time (John 2, Matt 21)

I. The tree without fruit

II. The temple without prayer/worship

1. While we can learn from the good examples
2. We can sometimes learn more from the bad ones

I. The tree without fruit

1. It's morning time and Jesus is heading to the temple
 - a. He's hungry
2. Seeing a leafy fig tree, He approaches it (**supposing fruit**)
 - a. When others were hungry, He used His creative power to provide supernaturally
 - i. He could have just as easily created food
 - b. His heart is for His people and not please Himself
 - i. **Whatever God does, He does for our benefit**
3. He was hungry, thirsty, tired, just as we are... to sympathize with us
 - a. He seizes the opportunity to teach us an important lesson with this brief interaction

4. In His statement, Jesus is giving us warning and instruction
5. Fig trees produced fruit twice a year...
6. **The fruit comes before the leaves**
 - a. And so, if you see a tree with leaves, you expect fruit
7. This is a picture of the kind of fruit we find in our lives
 - a. It's an indicator of
 - i. Salvation
 - ii. An abiding relationship with Jesus
 - b. Also it's an indication of
 - i. Fruit of love (Gal 5:22)
 - ii. Fruit of good works (Phil 1:22)
 - iii. Fruit of our lips in praise (Heb 13:15)
 - iv. "By their fruits you shall know them."
 - v. The parable of the four soils and you find the good soil produces fruit
 - vi. John 15 verse 5, Every branch that abides in Me brings forth much fruit
8. Jesus came near because He was anticipating having His hunger met by this wayside tree. But when He got there, it says, "He found nothing on it but leaves."
9. **MacArthur**: Leaves without fruit is religion without reality

10. The fig tree is also a symbol for the nation Israel and how God expected good things from them

a. Several parables suggest that God entrusted them with His vineyard and they were unfaithful

b. He wanted to see good fruit from them

i. Faith

ii. True worship

iii. Generous spirit

iv. Love for others

1. They had the opposite of that

11. Israel was just like this fruitless fig tree. They had all the signs of spiritual life, but they had no fruit. They were keeping the letter of the Law. They were carrying out the Temple ceremonies. They were observing the ancient feasts and the sacrifices. They were religious in every detail, but they had no spiritual fruit. (**Carr**)

12. Why was this tree fruitless?

13. Jesus was leaving Bethany: **house of Dates**

14. Bethphage is the house of figs

a. The fruitless tree was alone

b. That's significant because in order for fig trees to become fruitful, they require cross-pollenization

i. A lone tree doesn't produce fruit

- 15.** There are many who say they believe in Jesus but refuse to associate with other believers
- a.** Many others who are in the church, but they live isolated lives
 - i. No one is involved in their life
- 16.** What drew Jesus to the tree initially was the leaves
- a.** Leaves grow after the fruit
- 17.** If there was only leaves, then it gave a false impression
- a.** It seemed one way, but the reality is different
- 18. This is what Jesus rebuked**
- a.** False pretense
- 19.** Everyone goes through challenging times
- 20.** Christians hear a message about being fruitful and feel the pressure
- a.** There can be a sense of shame, guilt when I take inventory and find that my:
 - vii. Love tank is empty
 - viii. Going through a dry place
 - ix. I'm not very fruitful
- 21.** The enemy jumps on this and wants to bring me under condemnation

- 22.** My tendency is to either **isolate** myself or **pretend**
- 23.** Sometimes I know things are not going well in my heart and there is no love, peace, joy... and I portray as if there were. This is masquerading
- 24. The church ought to be a safe place for us to be ourselves**
- 25.** If I'm portraying fruit when none exists, then I am not being genuine with
- a. Myself, Others, God**
- 26.** Not being genuine is a great tragedy in a person's life
- 27. We train ourselves to settle for the superficial when our hearts cry out for the real thing**
- a.** Living as though you are, knowing all along that you are not
- 28.** if we are living a lie, if we are masquerading when there's no fruit in our life then we need to realize:
- a.** Fruit grows naturally and doesn't require unnatural self effort
 - b.** Jesus is calling for a united heart that bears fruit naturally
- 29.** It's easy to start pretending when you hear messages like
- a.** You are not good enough
 - b.** You are on your own
 - c.** God is not pleased with you
- 30.** God desires to replace any lies(darkness) with His truth

a. Isaiah 43:3 Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honored and I have loved you

b. Psalm 92:12 The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. those who are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing

a. As long as it was alone, it's leaves were an indication of a healthy fruitful fig tree

i. There is nothing more dangerous than being alone

b. it's important to distinguish between isolation and solitude

i. Solitude is necessary to search our own hearts and be alone with God

ii. Isolation is dangerous

c. An interview: as to why people are alone:

i. Hurt feelings, confusion, fears, embarrassment, confrontation, loneliness, shame, anger, control, disrespect, inferiority, criticism, and boredom

31. Steven Arterburn: There's a sense of safety and control in isolation and disconnection, but it's a false sense of safety. In fact, living lonely is anything but safe. It's a dangerous way to live because it allows you to miss real life and real people and all the benefits and rewards that go with growing relationships

32. Elijah was alone

- a. Something caused him to be isolated, yet when the pressure was high, he broke down

33. Since people have hurt me in the past, I will keep my distance from people

- a. I can be in a crowd of people and still be alone

34. As we go through life, we need to check in with:

- a. God and His Word
- b. Our spiritual leaders who can help us navigate

II. The temple without prayer/worship

1. The Temple is the heart of the nation
 - a. It's where people meet with God
 - b. Offer their sacrifices
 - c. Have their sins forgiven...
2. Instead, there was buying and selling in the temple
3. Annas the High Priest set up "Bazaar of Annas" and made merchandise in the temple
4. The high priest and elders turned it into a market, not a place to worship
 - a. Foreign currency was forced to be changed into Jewish shekels
 - b. Animals were inspected by designated priests
 - c. Edersheim, (a Jewish historian), you would pay ten times the value of that lamb

5. So why did Jesus turn over the tables and rebuke them?
6. It ruined the picture that God drew with the temple
7. This was supposed to be a visual illustration on true worship and sacrifice
8. I bring the best of what I've got - That is all the Lord requested, lamb, dove...
9. Religious ceremony takes advantage of me by highlighting the imperfections of my sacrifice and forces me to sell out my true offering to God with a "purchased one"
 - a. of what I bring to the table, vs. what religion wants to give me
10. My true offering is what truly belongs to me and I feel every word that comes out
11. **A united heart that is focused on God - Unite my heart to fear your name**
12. This purchased one is the one I don't know or have a relationship with - distant and I don't identify with it
13. In my attempt to offer God my best, I become completely detached from the offering and missing the entire point
14. The picture and understanding of the 5 days of keeping the lamb and then offering it was completely missed

- a. 5 is for grace. So the interpretation is that we build a relationship on grace with the sacrifice that you know is perfectly innocent and will lay it's life down for your sins
- b. **By Grace:**
 - 1. I Believe that my sacrifice is enough by God's grace. The faith I have is a gift of Grace
 - 2. We Approach God by grace
 - 3. We Offer to God by Grace
 - 4. We're Accepted by God's grace
 - 5. We're Ushered into the holy of holies by God's grace
- c. So it becomes a meaningless ceremony where I "pay my dues"
- d. And much is happening the same today as people come to church and pay their dues and don't know who Jesus is...

15. And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves

16. My presence is where I long to communicate with my people

17. Prayer is our line of communication with God

- a. Prayer will allow you to know who God is

- b. The enemy will fight that with intensity

18. If we ever got a hold of God's heart for us through prayer and the Word, our world will not be the same

19. It's where we speak to God and allow Him to speak to us

- 20.** It's in prayer that begin to realize who we really are and what God desires for us
- 21.** Prayer doesn't change God's mind or bend His arm, it changes me
- 22.** It's where we find strength to fight our enemy and find hope
 - a.** Mary, queen of Scotland: I fear John Knox's prayers more than an army of ten thousand men
- 23.** This is why the scribes and chief priests wanted to kill Him
 - a.** He's revealing their evil plan
- 24.** Meanwhile, His heart is for truth
 - a.** A united heart without pretense
 - b.** A place of prayer for you without distraction
 - i.** He wants to be found by us