

Text: Mark 11:12-26

Title: "The Temple, the Fig Tree and Faith"

Introduction: So, the first four weeks of our tour of the Holy Land kept us up in the Northern part of the country, mostly near Galilee. The last four weeks of the series will be spent in the area of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is arguably the most religious city in the world with Jews, Muslims and Christians all utilizing it as a home base for their respective religions.

Jerusalem is about 80 miles south of the Sea of Galilee (MAP of Israel), so for those of you doing the walking tour we have broken that down into four weeks of 20 miles each. As you can see, the region of Samaria lies between the Sea of Galilee and Jerusalem, so most Jews would have crossed over the Jordan River to the east and crossed back over the river near Jericho as they approached Jerusalem.

Your walking route? As the crow flies!

At this time, I invite you to take the insert out of your Passport/Program. On one side you will see our Scripture for today and on the other you will find a brief outline of how we are going to approach this Scripture. I hope that you will take time to fill-in-the-blanks as they appear on the screen(s). The idea is that if we take time to follow along and write some things down, it sticks with us better. After worship today, please refrigerate these outlines so that you are reminded throughout the week of what we've learned from God's Word. If you are listening on line, you can pause the audio and download this outline as part of the Passport available on our website ... then you too can fill in the blanks!

So, as we approach Jerusalem, I would like to show you a couple of pictures. First, when Jesus and his disciples went to this Passover Festival, they would have been just a few of hundreds of thousands of Jewish pilgrims who desired to have their Passover meal within the walls of the city. BUT, there was no way that that many people could be housed in Jerusalem. Many people had to spend the evenings in neighboring towns.

Jesus and his disciples, we are told, spent their nights in Bethany (hometown of Lazarus, Mary and Martha ... good friends). To get from Bethany to Jerusalem, the disciples and Jesus would have walked to the west over the Mount of Olives. As they came over the Mount of Olives, this is how they would have seen Jerusalem (PICTURE). Only there would have been many fewer buildings outside of the walls of Jerusalem. For safety from enemies in the 1st Century, the city gates would have been closed at dusk.

Also, there was not a Muslim Mosque (gold dome) on the Temple Mount, but the Jewish Temple would have been there. This Temple (picture of model) would have stood **twice as high** as the mosque. So, that is the awesome sight that they would have seen as they approached Jerusalem.

Here's what we know leading up to today's Scripture ... Jesus has entered Jerusalem on a Sunday (day after Sabbath). We call it Palm Sunday ... much cheering and praising God as Jesus enters. After the parade, Jesus goes and checks out the Temple and then they leave the city before the gates close ... back to Bethany.

Our Scripture for today is from Mark. We pick up the story in chapter 11. It's the day after Palm Sunday.

READ MARK 11:12-25 NOW (V. 26?) AND PRAY!

- I. The Fig Tree
- A. As Jesus and his disciples leave Bethany and approach Jerusalem again on Monday morning, we are told that Jesus is hungry.
1. He sees a fig tree with full-grown leaves.
 2. Most fig trees when they are in full leaf, have some sort of fruit on them, whether it is ripe, fresh fruit (which it was not the right time of year for that), or pre-season fruit (also edible).
 3. This tree showed no fruit at all, which probably meant that it was a young tree that could look promising but was not going to bear any fruit that year.
- B. Now, before you all get upset about this; please understand that Jesus is *setting up an object lesson*.
1. When Jesus finds that the tree looks like it might have some fruit on it, but it's bare, Jesus curses the fig tree.
 2. He says, "May no one ever eat your fruit again!"
 3. Please, for those of you who have gone green, there were plenty of fig trees in Israel in Jesus time and there are still plenty of them today.
 4. We will come back to the fig tree later...
- C. Remember that Jesus had gone into Jerusalem on Sunday (Palm Sunday) and after the party had died down, Jesus went to the Temple to check things out. Jesus was fully prepared for what he was about to do! He knew why he was in Jerusalem...
1. Jesus knew that he had to die for the sins of the world that week.
 2. In order for the prophecies of the Old Testament to come true, it needed to happen during the Passover festival when hundreds of thousands of Jewish pilgrims were in and around Jerusalem.
 3. In order for that to happen, some of the religious leaders of the day were about to get REALLY MAD!
- II. The Temple Clearing ...
- A. Jesus goes into the Temple yard and starts tipping over tables. Now, with the hundreds of thousands of Jewish pilgrims there ... not to mention the many Gentiles already in the city ... the Temple was full of tables and people who had a corner on the market.
- B. When people came into the city for Passover, there were going to be two things required for their stay ... money and a sacrifice.

1. **1st**, each Jew was required to offer a sacrifice to God through the priests in the Temple.
 - a. In Moses' Law it is strongly suggested that one buy their sacrificial animal in Jerusalem.
 - b. The poorer people would have bought doves—not pigeons, (we know that is what Joseph and Mary bought when they dedicated Jesus at the Temple in Luke 2) and those who had more money could have purchased sheep or cattle.
 - c. One of the problems that Jesus had was that these sacrificial animals were costing outrageous prices.
 2. **2nd**, each Jew needed money for the half-shekel annual Temple tax (all males age 20 and up). There was a certain type of money that had to be used there in Jerusalem that was not available throughout the Roman Empire and even in regions close to Jerusalem, like Galilee.
 - a. Everyone had to change their money from Roman coinage or Jewish coinage to this special form of money to pay the tax.
 - b. It was okay to have a surcharge to make a living, but these guys had the pilgrims over a barrel and were taking advantage of it!
- C. Jesus loses it!
1. Jesus has problems with these men making money off of people who desire to get closer to God. In the name of Jesus' Father, these men are ripping people off with their money-changing and their selling of sacrificial animals.
 2. The people knew that they were being ripped off, kind of like you and I buying a 20oz. soda at a gas station for \$1.50, knowing that we could get a 2 liter at the grocery store for less!
 3. Jesus biggest problem? This was all happening in the Gentile courtyard! How on earth were they going to invite these people to serve God when all they ever saw God's followers doing was ripping other people off?
 4. Remember Jesus said that the Temple would be called a place of prayer for ALL NATIONS!
 5. Again, Jesus is showing concern for non-Jews!
 6. Jesus is mad at the Jewish religious leaders because they are pretending to be one thing, while they have really turned the Temple into a hideout for thieves ... themselves!
- D. Jesus leaves the city and heads back to Bethany and we are told that the religious leaders began planning how to kill Jesus.

III. The Fig Tree

- A. The next morning (Tuesday), Jesus and his disciples are again headed into Jerusalem from Bethany and they pass by the fig tree that Jesus

spoke to the day before ... Guess what?!? It was dead from the root up!

- B. Disciples heard what Jesus said and the disciples saw the result. Jesus was upset with a tree that was pretending to have fruit on it (full leaf), but remember that this was an object lesson wrapped around what happened in the Temple.
 - 1. The Jewish religious leaders looked like they were representing God.
 - 2. BUT, they did not have any fruit (results) for the Kingdom.
- C. Jesus also uses this dried up tree to teach the Disciples about faith.
 - 1. They heard him curse the tree and then they saw the result and again were amazed at Jesus' power.
 - 2. Jesus offers them the same power.

IV. Faith in God

- A. "Have faith in God (v. 22)." It was by faith that Jesus said out loud to the tree that it wouldn't feed any more people. He knew that the disciples heard it.
- B. Jesus tells them ... now, remember where they are ... they are crossing from Bethany to Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives ... "you can say to this mountain (the Mount of Olives), 'May God lift you up and throw you into the sea (PICTURE OF DEAD SEA) (the Dead Sea is visible from the Mt. of Olives in Jesus day ... fewer houses and buildings).
- C. The disciples just got an object lesson, but He's not done!

V. Pray for Anything

- A. Listen to this ... Jesus says, "You can pray for anything, and if you believe, you will have it." (v. 24)
- B. Then Jesus says something kind of weird: "But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too." (v. 25)
- C. We pray that every week ... "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."
- D. Do you know why Jesus said that? So that we don't all pray for trucks! BUT, Pastor Stan, it says that we can pray for anything, right?!?
- E. In a round about way, Jesus tells us that we can pray for anything, and if you believe, it will happen ... IF YOUR HEARTS ARE LINED UP WITH GOD'S!
 - 1. We are supposed to pray for Kingdom stuff, not selfish stuff.
 - 2. Selfishness causes GRUDGES and lack of FORGIVENESS ... when I'm not willing to forgive then life is all about ME!
 - 3. When I'm praying and Jesus sees that from my heart I am willing to forgive and forget and not hold onto that grudge anymore; then, Jesus knows that life is not about me anymore.

4. When we are forgiving to God's other kids, then Jesus knows that we care more about the Kingdom of God than ourselves!
 5. When we care more about the Kingdom of God and filling God's backyard with people, THEN we will be praying for things that matter to GOD!
 6. NOW ... Now that your heart is in the right place and you're seeing the world the way God sees the world ... "Pray for anything, and if you believe it, you will have it."
- F. We need more space or some way to reach and teach more people! WHY? Because there are a lot of people in this community and this part of the world who HAVE TO get to know Jesus Christ before it's too late!
1. Pray with me.
 2. Believe with me.
 3. We WILL HAVE IT!
 4. If you are holding a grudge this morning; you are of no help to God's Kingdom!

Next Week: More time on the Mount of Olives as Jesus last week on earth draws to a close...

Let's Pray!