

Mark 11

V.1-7 Jesus fulfills prophecy, preparing for what is called the triumphal entry.

Jesus draws near to Jerusalem via this town Βηθφαγή (House of Figs) that's important as it will come into play shortly.

The time has come for Jesus to fulfill the words of the Book as He instructs his disciples to secure for him a young colt.

[Zec 9:9 NKJV] 9 "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He [is] just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.

This was coming to pass before their very eyes. God's word is certain. The things that He has promised will come to pass, will come to pass.

Please note that He sent them again in a pair.

His instructions to them are very specific even down to resolving the awkward situation of what could be perceived of as theft.

He tells them that they are to rely on Him, on his reputation, "tell them that **the Lord** has need of it."

It may have been their natural inclination when put in that awkward situation to rely on their own merits. They may have wanted to ask, “Don’t you know who we are? We were handpicked for this task.”

But Jesus instructs them to rely on His name and reputation rather than their own. If this duty of theirs is for Him, then it is by Him they must accomplish it no matter how menial it may seem, even fetching a donkey. How applicable this is for us.

This is the animal Jesus chooses to use to enter Jerusalem - a farm animal, a pack animal, one that is untrained (nobody has ridden on it), and one that is not even fitted with the tools of the trade.

They, the disciples, turned their clothes into horse blankets (rather, donkey blankets) for the Lord Jesus. Have you ever smelt a donkey?

But to ride on a Donkey was kind of a big deal! (Judges 10:4, 12:14)

V.8-11 The triumphal entry

Jesus is welcomed nearly supernaturally into Jerusalem.

He has always attracted a crowd but here the people are laying their things down for this animal to walk over, they are crying out in praise and expectation.

The time has come for the fulfillment of God's word and nothing will keep that from happening, not even the crushing multitudes who made it difficult for Jesus to move around at times. His path has been made straight by the Father.

This great kingly procession is brought into being as foretold on the spot by all things that are at hand. This moment is big!

The people in concert with one another welcome Him by God's own word.

Their cries of Hosanna - "save now, and blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" are from God's own word.

[Psa 118:25-26 NKJV] 25 Save now, I pray, O LORD; O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity. 26 Blessed [is] he who comes in the name of the LORD! We have blessed you from the house of the LORD.

What's more, they recognize at least partially that this is God's promise coming to pass in front of their own faces. God was bringing the kingdom to them, but on a much larger scale than they perhaps imagined.

Jesus Christ was establishing the kingdom of the cross forevermore.

This was all under God's sovereignty and nobody could deny this moment.

[Luk 19:39-40 NKJV] 39 And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples." 40 But He answered and said to them, "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out."

Even if the people were silent, the very stones would welcome Christ in this moment as directed by God.

Notice Jesus doesn't stay in Jerusalem overnight. The only night he will spend in Jerusalem is the night of His betrayal.

V.12-14 Jesus curses a fig tree

Jesus is hungry - He was/is fully human. He sympathizes with our weakness, He was tempted in all points as we are tempted yet without sin. (Heb 4:15)

We need to examine this event carefully and make sure it is anchored in our biblical understanding of who Christ is and what his purpose is.

First of all this is Christ's only recorded destructive miracle.

Next question to answer is, why did He do the thing? This is important for us to understand for the same reason that it was important enough for the gospel writers record it.

If we see this as an impetuous tantrum on Jesus' part because this tree lacks a morning snack then we then are open to mischaracterizing Jesus' nature as quick tempered and vindictive - willing to snuff out life for minor infractions. That is not the Jesus of the Bible.

The next thing we must consider about Jesus is why did he approach the fig tree if, as the author records, "it was not the season for figs"?

Was Jesus ignorant, unschooled in horticulture or the seasons? This too would be a mischaracterization of the person of Christ.

Remember that Jesus used many many parables derived from agriculture and daily life to instruct the multitudes and his own disciples precisely because He understood them. By them He communicated the heavenly wisdom that he possessed by using something known and knowable to the common man.

Jesus even taught a parable about a fig tree:

[Luk 13:6-9 NKJV] ..."A certain [man] had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. 7 "Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?' 8 "But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize [it]. 9 'And if it bears fruit, [well]. But if not, after that you can cut it down.' "

Since Jesus is not ignorant we can safely say then that Jesus' assumption was that if this plant was leafy enough to draw his attention at this time of year, even out of season - unnatural as it was, then Jesus reasonably believed that there should be some fruit on the branches. After all, such a seemingly developed tree promised fruit.

Now, it was springtime - the time of the Passover and here's what we know about fig trees. Once they start to get leafy the fruit isn't far behind!

We have a fig tree at our house that is leafy and guess what...there's already fruit on the branches!

Jesus finds that this tree has been misrepresenting itself and so takes this time to teach his disciples a valuable lesson about showing off our unseasonal growth and the result of being fruitless trees.

This is an important teaching for the Christian to grasp.

We may panic at the thought and say, "Oh no! I must bear fruit," or we may realize that we have been presenting ourselves to others as lush green trees - but we lack the fruit that is so beneficial to others.

The key is found in John 15 - which Jesus taught them only a few days later.

[Jhn 15:2-8 NKJV] 2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every [branch] that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you [are] the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw [them] into the fire, and they are burned. 7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

If we abide in Christ then we will bear far more than the promise of fruit (leaves) we will bear actual fruit to His glory because He is the one who will grow it through us. We won't be able to help it!

V.15-19 Jesus “cleanses” the temple

He will not allow God’s people to be taken advantage of.

This is not the first time He has done this.

In John chapter 2 Jesus is recorded as making a whip of chords to drive out those who were profiting off of God’s people. They were exploiting God’s people for selfish gain.

This still happens today but there is a Biblical imperative against this - it is so clear.

[1Pe 5:2-3 NKJV] 2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock...

Jesus would not allow this to continue in His final days because He so loved God’s people and it grieved Him to see how they were mistreated and taken advantage of all while the religious machine kept turning.

V.20-24 Jesus addresses the issue with the fig tree by teaching about faith.

The implication is that the underlying question that Peter had was, “How did that happen?”

Jesus was the Lord over all creation. He knew that when He spoke a word, that thing would come to be.

This is not the name it and claim it doctrine because Jesus is supremely in line with the Father, He is one with the Father. He never did any miracle or act for His own selfish benefit.

Christ’s character diverges widely from the human condition! People try to speak or pray health, wealth and happiness into their lives while being utterly divorced from the nature of God the Father, Son and Spirit.

To them this is the doctrine that supports their claim to earthly riches! For those who are one with the God-head, this is the verse that teaches us WHO our God is - that He is sovereign over all creation and hears our prayers and makes us desire the things that He desires.

This instruction also reminds us that we are often out of alignment with the Father, and that our interests diverge from His holy interests often. That is where we come face to face, over and over, with our need of the Lord Jesus and His Spirit.

V.25-26 Almost an aside on forgiveness

What we get from these two distinct portions - one on praying in faith and one on praying in peace (reconciled to men, at peace with others, forgiving as we have been forgiven) is the importance and centrality that prayer ought to have in our lives. Yet it is one of the areas that Christians struggle mightily with trying to carve out time in the day to do it!

V.27-33 Christ's authority confounds the religious elite

And it still may today - He is the one who is in charge! Of every church! No matter how high our hats get, or how lengthy our titles - He is the one over all.

Mark demonstrates in His gospel and in this chapter that Jesus is Lord of all. From the entry, to the fig tree, to the temple - Jesus is Lord of all.

We also see the juxtaposition between Christ and the Pharisees - they feared the people, He loved the people, had compassion on them, served them, defended them.

Oh to know and reflect on the nature of Christ. Above all and yet servant of all. May we meditate on that.

