



His Final Steps...

Led to a Fig Tree

Text: Selections from Mark 11:12-14, 20-25 NAS 1995

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: During these Wednesdays of Lent, we are on a journey with Jesus as He takes His final steps *to save us from our sins!*

- In last week's sermon, *it was Monday of Holy Week*. Jesus went to the Court of the Gentiles, *just outside of the temple*, and drove out those who were exchanging money and selling animals. He did it for two reasons:
 - To restore a place in the temple complex where Gentiles could gather, pray, and worship.
 - To stop the Jewish leaders from robbing the people by giving themselves an unjust advantage regarding the exchanging and selling.
- Today's sermon will focus on what happened **before** and **after** Jesus' cleansing of the temple. Our reading, from **Mark 11**, *begins on Monday of Holy Week*, in the morning, **before** *Jesus cleansed the temple*.

1. **Jesus Cursed a Fig Tree on Holy Monday:** ¹² **On the next day [Monday], when [Jesus and His disciples] had left Bethany [for Jerusalem], [Jesus] became hungry.** ¹³ **Seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He**

found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs.¹⁴ He said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again!” And His disciples were listening.

- a. Was Jesus being unreasonable? Keep in mind, it was the time of the Passover, *so it was early spring*. He may have been looking for some of last year’s late figs or that year’s early figs – *but He found nothing*. He was hungry and could have eaten before He left Bethany, *but Jesus had something BIGGER in mind*.
- b. What was Jesus’ purpose? Dr. Kretzmann wrote: **“All the strength of the tree had gone into foliage [in other words, it looked healthy, impressive, but it had no fruit]... This tree was a type and picture of the Jewish people, and Christ’s purpose in performing this peculiar miracle was to bring the attention of His disciples to that fact.”** What about you, me, others – *looks can be deceiving!* When people are alive in Christ, *they will be bearing fruit!* Jesus said: “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful” (Jn. 15:1 NIV). What about the dead branches? Jesus said: “If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned” (Jn. 15:6 NAS).
- c. What happened next? He cleansed the temple; then He left the city of Jerusalem in the evening (15-19).

2. **The Tree was Withered on Holy Tuesday:**²⁰ **As [Jesus and His disciples] were passing by in the morning [on Tuesday],**

they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up. ²¹ Being reminded, Peter said to Him, “Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered.”

- a. What about Monday evening? It may have been dark, or the disciples may have been preoccupied, so the withered tree was not noticed on Monday.
- b. **From in leaf to withered from the roots:** The Son of God, as Creator of the fig tree, certainly had the ability to immediately cause the roots to dry up; then, with no nourishment flowing to the trunk, branches, and leaves, it quickly withered.

3. Jesus Taught about Faith, Prayer, and Forgiveness:

- a. Faith: ²² And Jesus answered saying to them, “**Have faith in God.**” ²³ Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him.” // “Rabbi, look...” The disciples were surprised to see what had so quickly happened to the tree that Jesus had cursed. Then Jesus told them, “**Have faith in God.**” In other words, when you ♦fully trust in God and ♦do not doubt in your heart, then God will grant your request!
- b. Prayer: ²⁴ “**Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you.**” // Jesus had just said, “**Have faith in God.**” So why do we need prayer? Prayer is the God-given tool by which we ♦draw close to God, ♦talk things over with God, and ♦build our confidence in God’s promises!

WHY? So that we truly **have faith in God!** Then, when we pray in agreement with God's will, our requests will be granted! What things are critical?

- i. Be repentant (Ps. 66:18).
 - ii. Be in relationship with God through Jesus.
 - iii. Grow in knowing God through His word and prayer.
 - iv. Ask in agreement with God's will.
 - v. Ask in faith, without any doubting.
- c. Forgiveness:²⁵ **“Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions.”** // God's forgiveness to us through Jesus is **CRITICAL**. Then, our forgiveness to others is **CRITICAL**. Why did Jesus mention it here? Because, *if we are praying AND YET NOT FORGIVING*, ♦we are without God's forgiveness and ♦He has closed His ears to our prayer, *so our prayer is worthless and powerless*. What things are critical?
- i. Rejoice in God's full forgiveness through Jesus!
 - ii. Extend your full forgiveness to all others!

Let Us Pray: Dearest Jesus, when we compare between ourselves and the Bible, *we know we are sinners*. Therefore, *we are so grateful for Your finished work to save us!* Now, help us to ♦rightly trust God, ♦fortify our faith with prayer, ♦forgive as forgiven, and ♦honor You in our lives!

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