

Sunday, November 6, 2016

Pastor Don Denyes

## Introduction to Mark 11:11-25

Those who are skeptical of the Bible's teaching often base their skepticism on a casual reading of the text. For anyone to have a justified criticism of someone else, however, there must be at least an attempt to understand the other's position accurately. In other words, we ought not criticize someone we do not understand. Whatever the scenario, we ought to have a genuine desire to know the truth. If, after discerning the other position we still have a genuine concern, that is legitimate. But to simply criticize without trying to understand is foolish.

In this passage, Jesus curses the supposedly "innocent" fig tree, and messes with the livelihood of the merchants in the temple. However, to understand the Bible in truth, we must have the humility to study to discover what the text actually means. We cannot assume that our 21<sup>st</sup> century, western mindset is the most appropriate when understanding an ancient text, like the New Testament, much less when we try to understand how it relates to the Old Testament pictures of Israel.

### Context

Jesus has finally arrived in Jerusalem, but His ministry is not yet finished. He has a few more important lessons to teach His disciples, not to mention there is more that will harden the hearts of Jesus' opponents—namely the Jewish leaders. This passage demonstrates how Jesus accomplishes both of those things and in so doing, sets the stage for what will happen the rest of the week.

### Structure

- I. Jesus evaluates the situation in the Temple (11)
- II. Jesus curses the fig tree (12-14)
- III. Jesus cleanses the Temple (15-19)
- IV. Jesus explains what happened to the fig tree (20-25)

**Read and Reflect** *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

Read Mark 11:11-25

“Killing Trees and Flipping Tables”

I. Killing Trees

- Judgment on Unfaithful Israel
- He Is Seeking Fruit from His People

II. Flipping Tables

- Does God Get Angry?
- He Is Seeking Honest/Authentic Worship

III. Have Faith in God

- Prayer Will Help Us Overcome Difficulties
- Prayer Flows from a Forgiving Heart

## Discuss

- 1) Many people object to Jesus' behavior in both the cursing of the fig tree and in the flipping of the tables in the Temple. Why do people object to that? How is Jesus' anger different than ours?
- 2) Read Isaiah 5:1-7. Pastor Don quoted this passage in the sermon. How does this passage inform our understanding of what Jesus is doing with the fig tree?
- 3) Reflecting again on Isaiah 5 and Mark 11: what kind of fruit is God looking for in us as a church? What are some ways you have seen fruit borne in the church? What are some ways we might be failing to produce that kind of fruit?
- 4) Jesus was zealous for the temple to remain as God had intended it (John 2:14-17). He wanted it to be a house of prayer for people from all over the world (Mark 11:17). What can we do in our church to make sure that our gatherings are welcoming to people from all different backgrounds?
- 5) Prayer is one of the crucial spiritual disciplines through which we can speak openly and intimately with the Lord and are made to be more like Jesus. How is your prayer life? Is there anything that inhibits you from praying the way Jesus describes in verses 22-25?

**Go Deeper** *(This section is especially for leaders to consider as they prepare for the Growth Group meeting)*

Gospel Connections: The gospel teaches us that God demands that His people bear fruit. However, we ought not think that having been saved by grace that we can bear fruit through our own effort. God's grace is ultimately what roots us in Christ (to continue the agricultural analogy) and causes us to bear fruit. Therefore, we ought not be discouraged and look to ourselves to bear fruit in keeping with repentance. Rather, as we continue to look to Christ who became sin for us, we will learn to bear fruit. As soon as we look to ourselves, we are doomed.

Whole Bible Connections: Israel was saved by God in order to bear fruit that would glorify Him. Israel was supposed to live out God's good plan for humanity as a demonstration to the other nations that the LORD is the one, true God and that only through worshiping Him would anyone be saved. Isaiah, (and many of the prophets) offer an indictment of Israel for failing to live up to their high calling. The sinful heart of mankind is what corrupts even the best calling. So, Israel's sin caused them to fail to live up to what God had commanded and therefore He needed to send Jesus to secure God's righteousness for mankind and ultimately take the good news of the gospel and send it out to the Gentiles.

Theological Connections: There are a couple of basic theological truths undergirding this passage. The first is God's holiness. God does not tolerate sin. Whether sins of omission (failing to produce the fruit that we ought) or sins of commission (deliberately doing those things which are disobedient to God), God is holy and it cannot be tolerated in His presence. So Jesus, in cursing the fig tree and flipping the tables, gives us an illustration of the holiness of God. The second, is the relationship between justification and sanctification. To be justified is to be united to Christ and clothed with His righteousness. However, true justification will always be accompanied by sanctification. When God accomplishes justification in a person's life through faith, He automatically continues the work of redemption in sanctification. You cannot have one without the other. If you are a Christian, you will bear fruit.