

Mark 11:12-26

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Date: 15 February 2026

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[0:00] Mark chapter 11. We're going to be in verses 12 through 26. Mark chapter 11 verses 12 through 26! The Word of God says, And he came to Jerusalem and he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple.

He returned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. And he would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. And he began to teach and to say to them, It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations, but you have made it a robber's den.

The chief priests and the scribes heard this and began seeking how to destroy him, for they were afraid of him, for the whole crowd was astonished at his teaching. When evening came, they would go out of the city.

And as they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree wither from the roots up. Being reminded, Peter said to him, Rabbi, look, the fig tree which you curse has withered. And Jesus answered, saying to them, Have faith in God.

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.

[2:01] 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. 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.

But if you do not forgive, Neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions. Let's pray. Father, we do thank you. We thank you for this day. We thank you for this divine opportunity of gathering together for those that are before us.

We praise you for those that are around us, That we have the opportunity to stand together and to read the word of God. What a joy. What a privilege. So Lord Jesus, we pray now as we read of your life, That you would read into our life, That it would speak to our hearts and our minds, And it would continue to conform us, And to transform us to become more and more like you.

May we be molded by the clear teaching of scripture, And may you be glorified in the manner in which we live. And we ask it all in Jesus' name, And amen. You may be seated.

I want you to see this morning from the passage before us, Two fruitless encounters. Two fruitless encounters. The encounter with the tree and the temple, And how they are fruitless in nature, And the outcome of them.

[3:18] And we have seen here in our teaching through the gospel of Mark, That by this time, Christ has come into the city. The city in which he will be observed on a daily basis for the next seven days.

It is an intentional time of inspection, In which he presents himself publicly and completely before the people, So that they may look at him, And see if there be any fault, Or any hindrance of any shortcoming found within this sacrificial lamb.

This is a time when Christ comes teaching, And he comes with authoritative power. But it is also a time in which he takes a moment to prepare the hearts and the minds, Of those who have walked with him, Namely his apostles and disciples that gather with them.

We find from the gospel according to John, That intimate conversation that he has with them at the last supper, In John 13, 14, 15, and 16, Concluding with a high priestly prayer found in John 17.

It is the time when Christ prepares them on that final night, The night of his betrayal. But it is not just that night that he is preparing them, Rather he is preparing them the entire week, As they go back and forth with him to Jerusalem, And then back to Bethany.

[4:26] And as they traverse along the road, He is preparing them for the departure that is about to come. A departure that will begin their public ministry. There will be a season of uncertainty, A season of fear.

And we know after the resurrection, There will be the coming of the Savior That affirms their faith in him, And in his departure and the filling of the Holy Spirit at the day of Pentecost. He is preparing them for the public ministry, Which they are about to take part in.

But we also know that he is also declaring judgment, For it is in these days that we see him weeping over the city of Jerusalem, That he makes the declaration that the glory has departed the temple, After the apostles say, Look at all the ornate walls, And all this magnificent structure. And he declares that the glory has departed. It is here that he declares that the city has rejected the prophets who have come to it, That judgment is soon coming. We find that great teaching in the Gospel of Matthew, In Matthew chapter 24 and following, It talks about the last days and the end days, And really is a declaration of judgment.

And we see all those matters happening here in the passage before us, Because we see it is a fruitless encounter. And in between that, Or amongst that really, Is this encounter with this fig tree.

[5:40] And we scratch our heads and say, Well, why does this even matter? Hopefully we will see it within the context of why it matters, And exactly everything that is going on. We are told, first of all, That this encounter, Two encounters, Are encounters of unmet expectations.

It tells us that when Jesus is leaving Bethany, And going to Jerusalem, That he is hungry. And seeing a fig tree at a distance, He sees that it is in leaf. And he goes that by chance, He may find fruit upon it.

And he goes and he looks. And now it is kind of confusing, If we are going to be honest. And if we are going to look at the passage before us, He is the creator and the sustainer of it all. And surely he knows the seasons, And he knows the days.

And clearly the passage tells us, It is not the season for figs. Though there could have been an early fig, Which we find referenced there in the book of Malachi, In the Old Testament, In which the Lord and Savior himself declares, That the nation of Israel should be like the early fig tree, Producing fruit thereof.

And there are so many different analogies, Which we could bring upon it. But yet what we find, I said Malachi, I meant Micah. But what we find, Here is that Christ has a physical need, And it is a need of hunger.

[6:52] And he sees something that should meet that need. And it is a tree, A fig tree, That is on the way. And when he goes to it, He finds nothing. Though its appearance seems to present, That it could have something, There is nothing, But finding nothing upon it, But leaves.

Now stay with me in this. Because there was a literal need, Which he felt. And it was a need, That was a real need. It was a need to be fed. Because he was fully man, And fully God.

And the creator went to the creation, To meet and satisfy that need. And at that moment, That what he found, Was one that had an appearance of substance, But no sustenance to it. And he realized, Knowingly, That he would not be able to meet his need, Here in this tree.

So therefore, He declares this curse upon it, Which we will get to in just a moment. But I want you to hold on to a phrase, That is found in that strange encounter. It says, And the disciples were listening.

Because that is the key to everything, That is included in this passage. And the disciples were listening. He went to this tree, Because there was a need, In which he felt.

[8:00] Much like, When he goes into Jerusalem, He immediately goes into the temple. And when he goes into the temple, He goes into a place, That should have been a need meeting place. Because he walked into the court of the Gentiles.

And the court of the Gentiles, Is the only part of the temple mount, In which all nations were welcome to come. It was the closest, And anyone could get to the presence of God. For the

Shekinah glory of God, Rests in the inner recesses of the temple, Supposedly.

And at that time, The only way anyone in the world, Could get close to the glory of God, Was to make their way to the court of Gentiles. Now once you went through the court of Gentiles, You would get into the court of the Jews.

And once you went past the court of the Jews, You would get to the court of men. And then you would get into the holy court. And then you would get into the holy of holies. But it was that outer court, In which all of the world, All of the nations, Were welcome to find the great need of mankind. The need of reconciliation with a holy God. And it was a place where they could find their needs met. For it was to be a court of prayer, It tells us in the Old Testament.

[9:03] It is this portion of the temple, In which Christ quotes, And my house shall be called a house of prayer. And in context, That verse says, That my house shall be called a house of prayer, For the nations.

So that the nations, Would be able to cry out to God. One common misconception we have, Is that when we read the Old Testament, What we see is that God is the God of the Jews.

And that could not be further from the truth. For God has ordained, That the Jewish people would be his representative, Among the nations. For he is calling the nations to himself. And one of the manners, In which he would call the nations to himself, Is through the construction of the temple. And the temple would declare his glory, As the glory of God would rest upon it. That is why, When the temple is destroyed, It declares his judgment. But it is the erection of the temple, The construction of it, Declares his glory to all who pass by.

And there was a place of welcoming, For all the nations. And we refer to it as the court of the Gentiles. For all of mankind has a hunger within them. And all of mankind has a longing.

[10:09] The book of Ecclesiastes tells us, That God has set eternity in the heart of all men. We looked at it for just a moment, This morning in our Sunday school hour, How the Baptists have clearly defined, And dictated this thing called soul competency.

That God has put within the heart of every man, A longing to know him. And God has also put within the heart, Of every individual, That they may know him, Once God reveals himself to them. That their sin has created a breach, A divide, Which they cannot cross on their own.

But yet God, In his omniscience, And in his sovereignty, Can reach out and draw them to himself. And they do not need anyone, To tell them about him. For what is known about them, Has been put within them.

Paul declares in the book of Romans, Romans chapter 1. People always ask me, One of the most common questions, I haven't got it yet, But it's one of the most common questions, That I get. The reason I haven't got it, Is because we haven't got to the fourth week, Salvation and sanctification. But what about those, Who have never heard the gospel? I say, Well, Scripture answers that, Right? God has set within the heart, Everything that they ought to know, That man has a longing, To know who God is.

[11:14] And God has created a means for that, A place where that need may be met, In the time of Christ, It was in the court of Gentiles. And yet when Christ, Shows up in the court of Gentiles, There's no holy encounter with sinful man, Rather it's a marketplace, It has all the appearance, Of a place of welcoming, Much like the fig tree that's in leaf, It has all the appearance, Of being a place, Where one may come and worship, But what is really going on, Is we are interchanging money, We're selling the wares, We're selling everything, That is needed to worship, And think about it for just a moment, If you will, Who needs the sacrifices?

For the Gentiles cannot go inside the temple, To offer that sacrifice, It is only the Jewish people, That can carry that sacrifice, Any further, So they're selling to fellow Jewish individuals, What was to be a place of welcoming, Was really a place of narrowing, It was a place of saying, Only the Jewish people can come, And buy what they need, They had made it convenient, By the way, Let's just stop right here, And understand it, They had made worship convenience, A convenience, Because see, In the Old Testament, When the temple was erected, And God's name was called, To dwell up in a place, Then that name was put there, And the glory of God rested there, And you would take your offering, You would put your lamb, Upon your shoulders, And you would carry that lamb, To worship, And as you carried that lamb, You would understand the weight, Of the sacrifice,

You were about to give, God made a provision, For those who were far away, And said if the provision, Was this, That if you live so far away, Then you would take your lamb, And sell your lamb, And get money from it, And then you would go, With that money in your hand, And get closer to the temple, And you would buy another lamb, And then you would purchase that lamb, And you would carry that lamb, Up to the temple, Up the steps of the temple, And you would, Bear the weight, Of that sacrifice, That you were bringing, So that you would understand, This is a physical sacrifice, Man got smart, And said I'll tell you what we'll do, Let's cut out the middle man, Let's make it where they can come, Directly to the temple, And we'll have everything they need, It's like Walmart, Inside the temple right, Everything they need to worship, Is right here in the court, Of the Gentiles, You don't have to carry it up the steps, You don't have to bear it, On your shoulders, You don't have to even know it, You come to our table, We'll sell it to you, We'll hand it over to the priest, And they can sacrifice it for you, They had made worship convenient, But it wasn't meeting the need of man, For man needs to know, The sacrifice costs something, The sacrifice is something, The sacrifice has some weight to it, And in so doing, That also cut out any access, That the nations had to holy God, It had all the appearance, But it was not meeting the need, For it was to be a place of prayer, For the nations, And there was no prayer going on there, And he overturned the money changers, And those who were selling wares, And those who were carrying burdens, Through the temple, For this was a place of fruitless display, Unmet expectations, Secondly, We notice, When the unmet expectations are present, There is an unavoidable condemnation, Christ, When he looks at the fig tree, And he sees nothing, That is there for his usefulness, For it doesn't matter, If it's in season or out of season, By the way my friend, We are to be prepared, When the Savior comes, And he expects his fruit, We ought to be ready, When he shows up, And now the creator has went to his creation, And there is no fruit to be found, So he says, No longer will anyone eat fruit from you, And he declares a curse, I love what Charles Spurgeon said about this, Spurgeon said that he is, Redeemer and savior, He is a glorious forgiver of sins, And he will bear the shame, And the burden for all who reject him, But yet in this moment, And in this instant, We also see the just condemnation, Which he can easily declare, But the source of his condemnation, The weight of his condemnation, Fell upon a tree, Not upon man, For when they crucified him, He said, Father forgive them, For they know not what they do, But yet when he found no fruit upon that tree, He cursed it, And it withered from its roots up, And the disciples were listening, You say, But it wasn't the season for fruit, Oh this is a just condemnation, For he is the creator, He was history, He created it, He fashioned it, And he formed it, All things belong to him, Therefore he can expect fruit from it, And then he goes to the temple, And by the way, That's his temple, When he declares that the glory has departed, It is when he walks away from the temple, The last time, So how can he say the glory has departed,

[16:00] Because he is the glory of the father, And when he walks away from the temple, He can say the glory has departed, It is Ichabod, Written across it from that moment on, For no longer does he go into that temple, While he was there, He is the light of the world, And the glory of the father filled the temple, But when he leaves, The glory has departed, But it is his temple, So when he goes there, And he finds unmet expectations, He begins to get a little indignant, He turns over the tables, He begins to throw them around, He begins to get a little carried away, And he begins to whip the people out of there, I remember one of the greatest illustrations, I ever saw of this, Was at a pastor's conference, At the Southern Baptist Convention, Our brother who pastors, Around the Memphis area, But he pastors in the Mississippi side, Of the Memphis area, And he was preaching, And he had brought out this little, You may remember them, I used to have tea parties at once, The little princess tables, The little plastic princess tables, Had the little chairs, I used to have tea parties,

With my daughter at one of those, I'd put my tuxedo on, And go sit down and have a tea party, And he came out, And he was in his Sunday best, He was in his finest, And he was sitting at the table, And he was preaching, And he gets up and he takes the table, And he throws it across the stage, He says this is what our Lord and Savior, Did in the temple, Oh he's meek, That doesn't imply that

he's weak, But that's his house, And just so we understand it, More than likely this is not the first time, He had done that, For the three synoptic gospels, All have this cleansing of the temple, At the end of Christ's ministry, John also has a cleansing of the temple, But it's at the beginning of his ministry, Now Bible scholars go back and forth, And some say well, John wrote this out, Just because that fit his time frame, And that was convenient for his placement, But really what he's recording, Is the same event that happened at the end of his life, But I don't think that that is the case, Because it is in John that we find something unique, In John, Jesus has a whip, And is whipping people, And in John, Jesus never says anything about the people, Carrying wares, Or merchandise through the temple, There are things that are unique, To each and every account, And what we find, Is that Jesus begins his ministry, By cleansing the temple, And he ends his ministry, By cleansing the temple, And then he declares, That the glory has departed, This time, His condemnation is just, It's even a little bit more severe, Because, When the master and maker of it all shows up, And there's no fruit to be found, We cannot avoid the condemnation that comes, Third and finally, Notice this, Why all of these matters, There's a connectivity that runs through this passage, Right?

His disciples were listening, And it is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, And then on the next day, Peter remembers, Jesus had cursed this tree, Look at this unparalleled invitation, In the midst of this judgment, In the midst of this righteous display, Of condemnation, And the authority and the power of the Savior, The expectation that fruit ought to be born, Where it is called to be, Notice the invitation that is extended, It says, And as they were passing by in the morning, They saw the fig tree withered from the roots up, Being reminded, Peter said to him, Rabbi, Look, The fig tree which you cursed has withered, Now, I don't know about you, But when I read this text, I would expect to see Jesus saying, Well, Yes, It should have, Because I didn't find any fruit upon it, Or something like,

Well, That's what it gets, Because it was supposed to bear figs, And it doesn't, But he doesn't, He doesn't even talk about the tree, And the fruit therein, As a matter of fact, He uses this reminder, This reminder, This reality of something, He has just declared the day before, Because they were listening, So, I believe it is my understanding of the passage, That the whole reason the tree is cursed, Is so that Jesus could teach them something, On the next day, Because they were listening the first day, And they needed to hear the invitation, On the second day, Because there's something sandwiched, In the middle there about this, My house shall be called the house of prayer, He doesn't talk about the tree at all, He talks about an invitation, That he's extending to them, Look at what the word of God says, And Jesus said to them, Have faith in God, What?

[20:42] Have faith in God, That the tree is dead, Or have faith in God, That I can kill trees as well, No, It is continuously, Have an ongoing, Growing faith, And dependence, Upon the Lord God Almighty, Why?

Because it is there, That you find, Your nourishment, And the invitation is going to be extended, It is unparalleled, You won't find what you need in a tree, You won't find what you need, In the temple of man, But you will find what you need, Here in this invitation, Notice what it says, 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 to him, Therefore I say to you, It says, All things for which you pray and ask, Believe that you have received them, And they will be granted you, Here is the invitation, Run into the presence, Of the Lord God Almighty, In prayer, He said, I have just cleansed the temple, That was to be a house of prayer, I have displayed to you, The power of prayer along the road, You do not have to go into a building, Constructed by hands, You do not have to be, In a location,

You do not have to be, In the proper court, For man may taint that, And distort that, It could be on the roadside, When a need is being met, It could be in any place, He says, The invitation, Is to have an ongoing, Ever increasing faith, In the Lord God Almighty, And the opportunity, To stand in his holy presence, Wherever you are, It is an invitation of prayer, Now to be certain, This is not an invitation, To name it and claim it, We read this and say, Oh, So if I pray, And I believe that I'm going to get it, Then I have it, So it's name it and claim it theology, Right?

Like I need a brand new truck, And so I'm going to pray, That I have a brand new truck, And when I get outside, There will be a brand new truck out there, It's probably not going to happen, When I get home, My 1999 F-250, Will still be sitting there, The four wheel drive is still not working, And it will be sufficient, Okay?

It's okay, It gets done, What I need to get done, Say, Well, Have faith in God, Pastor, You're just not believing, No, I have faith that God has given me, What I need, The condition is, Have faith, There's nothing wrong with it, If you can have it, There's nothing wrong with it, If God provides it, I just don't need it at the time, Because he knows what I'll do to it, Right?

[23:04] He knows what'll happen, He knows me, It is my personal faith, And everything is conditioned, Upon the one that we're interceding with, And interceding to, It is praying, In the name of Christ, And being united with Christ, The mountain is really the difficult thing, Those things in the nation, Were seen as obstacles and hindrances, Those things that could hinder them, In their walk of faith, And he's saying anything can be moved, Whenever you stand praying, Forgive, If you have anything against anyone, So that your father who's in heaven, Will also forgive you your transgressions, Notice this invitation, It is an invitation, It is an invitation to be in holy communion, With holy God, On an ongoing basis, And I don't know if you've ever done that, And I know some of you have, But it's really powerful, When in prayer you realize, I'm holding something against this individual, And you have to forgive them,

And all of a sudden, You're welcomed into the presence of God, Saying, Oh God, But I don't want to forgive them, Oh God, I'd rather hold that against them, Oh, It's a difficult thing, But we're there, And we understand, That we have this opportunity, To be in his presence, And it's unparalleled, An invitation, We're in the courtroom of heaven, We may not be in the court of the Gentiles, We may not be in an ornate building, But we're in the courtroom of heaven, And there we stand, Before our Lord and Savior, He begins to reveal things to us, We be reconciled, With our brothers and sisters in Christ, Oh, I've left moments of prayer, And had to go find individuals, And ask for forgiveness, Oh, I've left moments of prayer, And had to write letters, Because people wouldn't answer their phone, To ask for forgiveness, You say, What did they respond?

No, I've never heard anything back from them, That's okay, Because I won't seek to live peaceably, With all men, As much as depends upon me, Oh, I've had the Lord work on my heart, And my mind, Many, Many times, What an invitation, Am I perfect?

Absolutely not, This past week, God's continued to sanctify your pastor, To work on your pastor, To shape and to mold him, And to show him things, That he needs to repent, And recant of, But what an invitation, An invitation to be in his presence, Knowing that any fruit, That we will ever bear, Is found in that presence, And knowing that it is there, That we do not find condemnation, And judgment, Rather, And we find restoration, And mercy, And we say, Oh Lord, Forgive me for my fruitlessness, Oh Lord, Restore me, May I not give the appearance, Of being fruitful, But rather, May the roots, The unseen aspect of my life, Really be growing, May I be the one, Who is in your presence, On a daily basis, Oh Father, Ensuring that the fruit, Is found below the surface, What an unparalleled invitation, For we do not want to be those,

Who meet our Savior, In a fruitless encounter, For we have been called, To bear much fruit, For the glory of the King, And may it be so in our lives, Let's pray, Father thank you for the day, Thank you for the opportunity, The Lord Jesus, I admit and I confess, That too often, I may be like the tree, Putting off the leaves, And giving the appearance, But I ask, Help me to be fruitful, Lord help me to live, In such a relation with you, That I may know you, And be known by you, And be of service for others for you, And I ask it all in Jesus name, Amen.