

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

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[0 : 00] Open up your Bibles to the Gospel of Mark. We're in chapter 11. Last week we ended off with Jesus making his grand entrance into Jerusalem and into the temple. Oh, before I forget, last week we passed out some pictures. Everybody like pictures? I like pictures.

We're going to pass out some more. So if you kids could do that, David and Isabella, and if anybody else wants to jump in there, and if you want one, which everybody should get one.

We have 50, so I think that is probably enough for everybody. Just raise your hand and we'll get those passed out to you. We'll reference those in just a bit. But Jesus made his grand entrance, some people call it the triumphal entry, into Jerusalem. And, you know, it was quite, there's a lot of anticipation here among the multitudes and Jesus' disciples.

Jesus, it's very clear that this is the Messiah who the prophets foretold. And they're wondering and anticipating, is this it? Is this the time when, the time that the prophets spoke of when the Messiah will take his seat in Jerusalem on the throne? And so, it's a little bit strange, right? It's not quite as triumphant as you might see with a secular king during that time with chariots and horses coming into the city. It's a, it's quite a humble event with some rag, you know, ragamuffin, vagabond type of folks from the country coming in with Jesus as he rides in, not on a horse or a chariot, but on a donkey and enters into Jerusalem.

And it, it ended there where Mark chapter 11, I think verse 11. And it says this, and Jesus went in Jerusalem and into the temple.

[2 : 02] So when he had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve. He just goes into Jerusalem and goes into the temple and he just looks around.

And then he leaves. And he goes back out, outside the city to, to Bethany. And people are wondering, what now? What's going to happen tomorrow?

And that's what we're going to talk about today. So big picture today, Jesus comes back into Jerusalem, back into the temple. On his way, there's this whole thing with a fig tree.

It's kind of odd. He curses it, seemingly without a really good reason. And then he has this huge, it's kind of like road rage, seems like, but this is like temple rage.

A rage in the temple, where he kind of flies off the handle, flipping tables and chairs, and, and pretty upset. And what's going on there?

[3 : 03] Why, why is he so upset with all the things going on in the temple? And then, comes back to the fig tree the next day. And then there's a little bit of a lesson there. And it seems like it's related, but it seems, how is it really related?

Jesus gives a lesson on answered prayer and forgiveness. And so we'll talk about those things. So we're going to go ahead and read through these, this passage that we're going to talk about today.

And then we're going to go through verse by verse. So start with me, Mark chapter 11, and we'll start with verse 12. Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, he was hungry.

And seeing from afar, a fig tree having leaves, he went to see if perhaps he would find something on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs.

In response, Jesus said to it, let no one eat fruit from you ever again. And his disciples heard it. They were paying attention. So they came to Jerusalem.

[4 : 04] Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves.

And he would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. Then he taught, saying to them, is it not written, my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations? But you have made it a den of thieves.

And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy him. For they feared him because all the people were astonished at his teaching. When evening had come, he went out of the city.

Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to him, Rabbi, look, the fig tree which you cursed has withered away.

So Jesus answered and said to them, have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, be removed and be cast into the sea and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.

[5 : 13] Therefore, I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them and you will have them. And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive them, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses. And that's where we'll end today and what we'll look at. So Jesus had gone into the temple, he had surveyed what was going on there and what he saw and then went back to this little village of Bethany and then came back to Jerusalem the next morning.

Well, on his way, it says, in the morning, he was, and by the way, it's about, I can imagine, I think it's probably about an hour walk from the city of Jerusalem to where they were staying in Bethany. But it says, the next day when they had come out from Bethany, they had just come out from Bethany. So they're just outside this little village and Jesus is hungry. Maybe he didn't get breakfast. Nobody cooked him breakfast, maybe, I don't know. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, he went to see if perhaps he would find something on it. And he found nothing but leaves for it was not the season for figs.

[6 : 43] So there were fig trees all around in this area of Jerusalem, this part of Judea. And so Jesus is hungry.

A lot of times when you're hungry, you know, today you go to the store, you go to the supermarket, maybe you go to the gas station, right, and get a snack. Back in that day, there were fields with, if it was in season, you could just grab something from a tree.

Now, there were actually laws around you weren't allowed to go just harvest somebody's field, but it was actually part of the law of Moses. Even if it wasn't your land, you were allowed to do what's called gleaning.

You could just grab some fruit from the edge of the, if you were a traveler, or if you were a foreigner, something like that, or even if you were poor, you could glean from the fields. Just on the edge of the fields, you don't get a basket, right, and just start filling your basket with other people's, the fruits of their labor.

But, if you were in need, you could go ahead and do that. So, Jesus is hungry, he's looking up ahead, and he sees this tree, and it's full of leaves, and so he goes up there looking, looking for food.

[7 : 56] And then he, and it says, the tree's not in season, so the big question is, like, does Jesus not know how this works? Why was he expecting there to be fruit on a tree when it's not in season?

This is in the springtime. We know what time it was because this is the Passover, and there's a very specific time of year that you have the Passover. But, he says this, he basically speaks to the tree, which is interesting, right?

You know, every once in a while, I will talk to inanimate objects, but not usually, right? And if you do that too much, you know, people might think there's a few screws loose. But, Jesus actually speaks to the tree in the form of a curse.

And what is a curse anyway? Well, we actually talked about this kind of on the opposite side, because what's the opposite of a curse? It's a blessing. A blessing. And we talked about this when Jesus blessed the children that came to him.

Remember that? And a blessing is like a prayer, but instead of a request to God, it's more of a pronouncement. may you, you know, have wealth and health and these types of things that you can pronounce over someone.

[9 : 15] And it's similar to a prayer, but different, and it's more of a pronouncement, not a request or a question. A curse is similar. It's a pronouncement on something or someone, usually a person, that is really looking for God to do something.

You see this a lot in the Old Testament, like in the book of Psalms, for example, or the Psalms. You'll see like imprecatory type prayers about God taking vengeance on my enemies.

In fact, I have an example here, Psalm 69, 24. David says this in Psalm 69, 24. Pour out your indignation upon them and let your wrathful anger take hold of them.

It's a curse on David's enemies. But it does seem odd. Why would Jesus do this? Why would he be upset at all that there are no figs on a fig tree when it's not the season for figs?

Was he just hungry and kind of his emotions got the better of him? We'll talk about that in just a second. This is actually a little bit interesting.

[10 : 30] Some people have pointed out that Mark does, there's a name for it, they call it a Markian sandwich. Now that sounds delicious, right? What's a Markian sandwich?

Well, Mark, there's like three or four, maybe even five times in the Gospel of Mark where he has these sandwich stories where you have one story and then it's kind of interrupted by another one and then after that other one it finishes up.

You actually see this with the woman with the issue of blood. There was a centurion that came to Jesus and said, hey, my son is sick and I want you to come.

And so, that's how the story started. And then on the way, it was interrupted by the woman with the issue of blood and then that whole thing transpired and then it continued on with the account of going to, with the man's son and he passed away and he was, or he was healed.

I can't remember the details of it. But here's another kind of example of that. We start with the fig tree then we have something else going on and then we come back to the fig tree later. So we'll come back once we get back to the fig tree we'll talk more about it.

[11 : 41] But then they came to Jerusalem. Verse 15. Jesus went into the temple and it says he began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves and he wouldn't even allow people to carry wares throughout the temple.

Now, here's where the pictures come in. So grab those pieces of paper. What's the setting here? What does this look like? Can you think about a temple and how many of you have actually been to Israel by the way?

Okay, a good handful maybe 10, 20%. I've never been. I've seen lots of pictures. I would love to go in the future but haven't been myself.

But these pictures are actually pictures of a model of what Jerusalem and the temple may have looked like back during the time of Jesus.

And this is something actually found in Israel. So there's this large model and you can kind of see what the city and what the temple might have looked like.

[12 : 47] You can't know for sure, right? All we have is some old portions of the wall that have been dug up, different artifacts and then certain descriptions from historians.

Josephus is one example of what things looked like and how they appeared. And so based on all the kind of evidence and descriptions and kind of put together a model of what things look like.

Just a little bit about the temple. So this is actually the second temple. Remember that the very first temple, the one that Solomon built, was destroyed by the Babylonians.

And it was later on during the time of, if you look at the books of Nehemiah and Nehemiah, who's the other guy? Ezra. Thank you.

Ezra and Nehemiah. That's the story about when the Jews were allowed to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls of the city and also rebuild the temple.

[13 : 46] And so back during those days after the initial captivity, they were allowed to rebuild the temple. And so many people call it the second temple. This is the second temple.

And so this temple was built around the same area, maybe not exactly in the same place where the first one was, but it was right on that same mountain, Mount Moriah.

The layout of the temple, the temple was quite large, and when we speak of the temple, usually we think about a building if you think about a temple. But the temple, when described, is not just the building.

There's actually a fairly small kind of covered building that's part of the temple. That's what you would call the holy, the holy place and the holy of holies. And who, there was only a few people that were allowed to go in there, right?

And in the holy place, you had to be a Levitical priest. The priests were the only ones allowed in the holy place. And there was only one person allowed to go into the holy of holies, and that was the high priest of the day.

[14:52] But there was more to the temple than just that small building. It was actually a courtyard. There was actually multiple courtyards. And so if you look at your picture, there's an inner courtyard, an inner courtyard.

It's a smaller courtyard with walls and gates. And in there was a courtyard for Israel. You had to be an Israelite to go inside there. And I think it was called the Court of Women.

And so there was a place I think only the men could go, but then there was a part that the women were allowed to go into. And that was the inner court. The outer court was enormous.

It was the size of multiple football fields. And this outer court was actually called the Court of the Gentiles. And you can imagine why it would be called the Court of the Gentiles because, well, Gentiles were allowed to go into this court.

Now, this outer court is where the setting takes place because this is where all this market of things going on, the buying and selling was happening in this outer court.

[16:05] And it wasn't a small area. Again, this is probably the size of two, three, maybe even four football fields. There's a large area here where people can set up their vendor booths and do their business.

But a question, and so, this was set up as a marketplace and remember the setting is this is the week of Passover.

So during Passover, Jews are coming from all over just as they had been commanded. If you remember the original Passover in Exodus, I think it's chapter 12.

the original Passover in Egypt where the angel of death came and passed over the homes of those who had put the lamb's blood on the doorposts, when that was commanded, it was said that when you come into the land that I give you, this is something that you will do every year.

Every year. And there's more details later on in the Law of Moses about what that should look like.

But every year, especially the men, were required to come and offer a sacrifice during the time of Passover, the Passover feast.

[17:19] So, one of the things that was needed was, well, some people would travel from far away. And actually, in the Law of Moses, it was stated that you can bring your own sacrifices, bulls, goats, lambs, or if you've got to travel a long way and you've got a lot of things that you need to sacrifice, you could actually just bring money and you could purchase your sacrifice right there or in the vicinity.

And so, this was a biblical, scriptural thing. It was according to the Law. So, going and buying lambs or other animals for sacrifice was part of the Law.

What were these money changers? What are the money changers doing there? Well, the money changers, the purpose of the money changers was, you know, there was lots of coinage and types of money out there and a lot of them had, you know, we know the ones that like have Caesar on the, his picture on there or other people.

Well, some of them had pictures of false gods and idols. And so, the Jews didn't like that and they didn't want that kind of money, you know, being used to buy things or being used to offer for the temple service and we'll actually read about, I think it's in chapter 12 about the widow's mite and so it was the mite was one of the kind of Jewish approved coins that they were allowed to use.

And so, that was the purpose of the money changer. You could bring your money from other places, think of it like a currency exchange, right? You go and bring your pesos or euros or whatever they have today and you can exchange it for U.S. dollars.

[19:03] And so, they would exchange the money for what they needed. And I'm sure there was also maybe you could take gold which would be, you know, have high value and get, you know, smaller denominated coins as well.

There's mention of the selling of doves. The selling of doves. And, well, what's that all about? Well, the Jews were required and there were different sacrifices but in this case you were supposed to bring a spotless lamb.

But there were alternatives for those who were poor. Those who were poor just because you didn't own a lamb or didn't have a ranch or a farm to raise sheep that didn't get you out of your obligation to go to the Passover and offer a sacrifice.

But if you didn't have enough money to buy a lamb or didn't have one as part of your family business, then you could instead offer a dove which would be fairly cheap to do. So you could go and purchase a dove. Why was it that Jesus was so outraged? And I've read, you know, as I was looking into this and seeing kind of what other commentators were saying, some people said, well, Jesus was upset because, and he did all this because, well, things were changing and he wanted people to know that there weren't going to be any sacrifices anymore. [20 : 31] And there's no indication of that whatever. In fact, Jesus throughout his ministry upheld the importance of the law of Moses and the sacrificial system.

Now we know later when Jesus dies and he's offered as a sacrifice, there is indication indication that his sacrifice replaced the other sacrifices but that's, I don't think at all what's going on here. He actually explains a little bit about why he's upset in one of the things that he says. He calls this place a den of thieves.

Or if I get the original language right, if you were to translate it quite literally, it would be a cave of robbers. A cave of robbers. This temple has been turned into a cave of robbers. And so he's equating what's going on here to thievery, to robbery. And why would that be the case? It seems that all of these business things going on were legitimate.

[21 : 37] Well, what was going on and we read about some of these things through Josephus in his writings. But wherever there's a lot going on, especially with religion and a lot of fervor around religion, there's an opportunity to make some cash, right?

And so that's what was going on here is people were kind of abusing this as an opportunity to really rake in the dough.

And so you can imagine this is a once a year thing. People are coming from all over. a lot of people are in a spot where they didn't bring something from their own wherever they're from and they got to buy it here and so you can just rack up the price and really make things really expensive for people. And so they would charge, I think I read from Josephus maybe up to 20 times the typical price for a dove during this time. and the money changers would charge exorbitant amounts for their service of exchanging money.

And it was done as a big business thing, a way to make profit. And is that what the purpose of this whole Passover thing was?

[23 : 02] For people to be able to make a profit? No, but you find this even today and we'll talk about this more in a second. This using faith, religion, and not even just Christianity, right?

You see this across multiple religions. There's an opportunity here to make some cash. So Jesus is outraged and he's flipping over tables and turning over seats.

There's even a description in the Gospel of John about using a whip and it's not clear if he was using the whip on people or if it was on animals. There were probably sheep and other things, other types of animals like that and maybe he was just driving them out along with the people.

But one of the questions that comes up here is, well, why was Jesus so mean? Why is he so upset? Doesn't Jesus know that that's not very Christ-like? And so there is this kind of standard, a worldly standard, that is many times imposed on Christians by the world.

[24 : 21] Sometimes you see it from within Christianity that, well, you have to be a really nice person all the time if you're a Christian. And obviously there is lots of instruction in the Bible about what?

Being gentle and kind and even lowly in heart and spirit, right? But I think we make a mistake if we think that that should be our demeanor, our attitude at all times in every scenario.

Obviously we see from the example of Jesus that really it should not be. And outrage and righteous anger is something that's actually common throughout all of the Bible.

You see prophets getting outraged, David, King David, when at the especially what? At injustice when he sees injustice.

And you see it especially from God himself becoming angry when he sees injustice all around. Not only outside of Israel but especially when he sees it inside of Israel amongst his own people.

[25 : 37] But when we see this coming from outside the Christian circles from the world, it seems like people are concerned with Christian character all of a sudden.

Like, well, you can't be so mean. You have to be nicer. Isn't that what a Christian is supposed to do? You're supposed to be like Jesus. And Jesus was always nice all the time. And so a lot of times there will be at least a, it will seem like they're concerned about Christian character.

But in reality, it's just a bullying tactic. It's an attempt to pacify Christians, to silence Christians. Because many people in the world, they want to be able to do what they want to do. They want to be able to commit acts of violence against unborn children, for example, without somebody getting in their way, or raising up some kind of moral standard for that.

They want to be able to redefine marriage to whatever they want it to mean. Or, you know, allow for changing of gender to whatever it is that you want for yourself.

[26 : 48] And even today, want to be able to provide for mutilating bodies of both adults, but especially children, without any kind of critique from these puritanical Christians, who really should just be nicer.

You shouldn't be speaking up or criticizing or making a big deal or being outraged about these things. You should just be nice. And as Christians, it's not always the time to be nice.

Sometimes we need to stand up and stand up for righteousness and truth in a world that's gone totally nuts. Now, at the same time, some people can say, use this as an excuse.

They can be mean to everybody, right? And I've seen this. Well, you know, Jesus used the whip in the temple, and so I can just criticize anybody I want and just be mean to anybody that I disagree with.

We have to be careful about that. But righteous anger is very biblical and we should not be bullied by the world as Christians to not speak up and stand up especially when truth and justice and righteousness are on the line.

[28 : 12] So getting more into why Jesus did this in the temple. In verse 17 he says this, he taught and he said to them, is it not written my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations but you have made it a den of thieves.

He makes an allusion here to two Bible passages. We're going to read these. One of them is in Isaiah and the other one is in Jeremiah.

Turn to Isaiah chapter 56 and we're going to read the first eight verses. Isaiah chapter 56. In Isaiah chapter 56 this is the prophet Isaiah speaking about something similar going on in Israel and specifically in the temple during his time.

And God's outrage during that time. Isaiah chapter 56 and we'll read all eight verses. Thus says the Lord keep justice and do righteousness for my salvation is about to come and my righteousness to be revealed.

Blessed is the man who does this and the son of man who lays hold on it who keeps from defiling the Sabbath and keeps his hand from doing any evil. He's talking about righteousness and justice and the importance of doing these things in Israel.

[29 : 41] Do not let the son of the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord speak saying the Lord has utterly separated me from his people nor let the eunuchs say here I am a dry tree for thus says the Lord to the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths and choose what pleases me and hold fast my covenant even to them I will give in my house and within my walls.

And what walls is he talking about here? What house is he talking about? This is the temple. My walls a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters.

I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the Lord to serve him and to love the name of the Lord to be his servants.

Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath and holds fast my covenant even then I will bring to my holy mountain. This is the mountain what we call today the temple mount and make them joyful in my house of prayer.

Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar. For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations. The Lord God who gathers the outcasts of Israel says yet I will gather to him others besides those who are gathered to him.

[31 : 09] So he's saying hey this is the purpose of my temple. He talks about the foreigner. Even the foreigner can come and he can keep my covenant there in the temple.

Even the Gentiles can come and partake. And I think that's a big reason why this court this outer court was called the court of the Gentiles. And Jesus actually uses this passage to make a point about what the purpose of the temple was here for.

For peoples from all over the world, even the Gentile people to come and even they might pray and seek God. But what do you think is being communicated to the Gentiles who would come and pray and this is what they see?

This is an opportunity to make profit? And God in other places condemns Israel. He's saying because of you, the Gentiles speak evil of me.

And that makes God really, really upset. You're supposed to be my representatives, my people, the one who represent me to the Gentiles. And you're making me look bad. So that was the purpose of the temple.

[32 : 25] And in Jeremiah 7, turn there, Jeremiah 7, we'll start with verse 1. This is another rebuke in a time past, hundreds of years earlier, I think maybe about 700 years earlier, regarding what the Jews were doing in the temple at that time.

Jeremiah 7, verse 1, the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word.

Where's he at? He's at the doorway, the gate to the temple. This is where Jeremiah is standing when he's giving this word. And say, hear the word of the Lord, all you of Judah who enter in at these gates to worship the Lord.

This is to all of you who are coming to this temple to worship. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.

Do not trust in these lying words, saying, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these. For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment or justice between a man and his neighbor, if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place or walk after other gods to your hurt, then I will cause you to dwell in this place in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever.

[34 : 05] Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know?

And then come and stand before me in this house which is called by my name and say we are delivered to do all of these abominations.

Has this house which is called by my name become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it, says the Lord.

But go now to my place which was in Shiloh where I set my name at the first and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of my people, Israel.

Shiloh was the place where God's presence rested before Jerusalem and what happened there? God destroyed it because of the transgressions of the people of Israel when his presence rested there in Shiloh.

[35 : 16] So he's saying, hey, go, check out Shiloh. Remember what happened over there? And now because you have done all these works, says the Lord, and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you, but you did not answer.

Therefore I will do to the house which is called by my name in which you trust, and to this place which I gave to you and your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.

He's saying, because of your corruption and your wickedness, you're not living like I told you to live, but you're following through with some of the rules and regulations that I gave you.

You know, there's like a checklist of things that you do. You know, you do the sacrificial lamb and the drink offerings and all these things, and you check all those things off, but you murder and you commit adultery, and you cheat and you steal, you take advantage of the poor, and you think that this is okay?

It's not okay. And so, I'm going to do the same thing that I did to Shiloh, to the place where my own name rests, to this temple that is in Jerusalem.

[36 : 34] This is what Jeremiah the prophet spoke, and this is the passage that Jesus is referring to when he calls it a den of thieves.

There's so much illusion here to the Old Testament prophets, and of course, who above anybody else should know about what the prophets spoke? The leaders of Israel, the scribes and the chief priests and the Pharisees.

And if going back to Mark chapter 11 and verse 18, it speaks of these leaders. And the scribes and the chief priests, they heard it and they sought how they might destroy him.

For they feared him because all the people were astonished at his teaching. You see, Jesus is in the lion's den here. The temple, this is where all the leaders are.

This is where the chief priests are. And they're watching this. They're seeing what Jesus is doing. They're seeing Jesus as he's teaching the people in the temple. Also, in other accounts, it says that on this same day, Jesus was also healing people.

[37 : 43] these chief priests, these scribes are the ones who are the most responsible for what's going on in the temple, for all the corruption and abuses that are happening here.

But it says this, right, that they thought, it doesn't say that they thought to themselves, wow, he's making some really good points, we should probably change up a few things. But instead, they dig in.

And they think, instead, how can we get rid of this guy? And it says it's because they were afraid. They were afraid of him.

And what was in that fear? Were they afraid that he was going to hit them with a whip? That wasn't it. See, they were afraid, it says, because all the people were astonished at his teaching.

They were afraid that the devotion of the people would be transferred away from them and to Jesus. Is that a bad thing?

[38 : 50] No, not at all. Remember, Moses was the one who had spoken. He says, there's a prophet that's coming after me. Him you shall hear. And Jesus is that prophet. I think the big lesson here is just looking at power and a love of power.

It's so easy. You know, with power you can do so many good things, right? If you just had the power to do it, you could do so many wonderfully good things.

And so often, whether it's Christian or non-Christian alike, we can justify all kinds of compromise and even outright evil for the sake of all the good things that we can do if we can just hold on to this power.

So the lust for power can be quite deceptive and it makes me think of things during our day in religion and the church. We can have a lot of influence, you know, as a church or a denomination. If we would just maybe mention sin a little bit less, not talk about certain sins, especially the popular ones. If we just avoid those things, we could have more people in our church and think about all the influence that we could have.

[40 : 22] If we just avoid a few topics, I'm not saying anything wrong, I'm just avoiding certain things that maybe the Bible says. We can just focus more on how to have a better life, how to have happier marriages, how to have a successful business, how to be a great leader, and just focus primarily on those things.

And man, lots of people would come to our church and we'd have so much influence. love to do it. And even we see this to a degree where many times we have seen both in individual churches to denominations where there's a willingness to just overlook abuses, sometimes outright immorality, sometimes even abuse against little ones, to just hide it, make sure nobody finds out because if people found out, they might stop coming to our church and then we wouldn't be able to influence them.

And eventually churches become completely and totally corrupt. But there was this seemingly good motivation. We just want to hold on to that power so that we can do good things and that love and that lust for power leads ultimately to complete and total corruption.

And we see it with every denomination that has ever existed. At least anyone that's more than 100 years old. And over time, that lust and love for power takes hold and it just becomes completely corrupt.

I was watching a video of the Methodists and I don't always call out people but the Methodists need to be called out. They are having some kind of general conference or whatever this week and it is just vile and filthy.

[42 : 26] They had this big split recently among the conservatives and liberals and basically the conservatives all left and now it's just there's no pretense of godliness there at all.

Promoting homosexual perversion and all the transgenderism stuff and everybody is making sure they share their pronouns and all that kind of stuff at this conference.

This was a denomination that started with Charles Wesley who was his big thing was holiness and he was really really legalistic but he believed in God's holiness and the Christians should be holy and he'd be rolling over in his grave today at the denomination kind of named after him.

Or his way of doing things. So you know even an individual church can fall prey. A lot of times we see the examples of big denominations those are the ones that make the news but even little

independent churches like ours should look out for those kinds of dangers.

It says this and we'll wrap this up with the fig tree and then what Jesus told afterwards so verse 19 when evening had come he went out of the city so he's done for the day he's done some temple rage flipping over some tables he's healed some people he's taught some lessons and then he's going back probably to Bethany for the day and it says in the morning as they passed they saw the fig tree and so they passed by they're heading back to Jerusalem the next morning and hey they notice the same fig tree and it is shriveled up it's dead as a doornail and that does not happen you know you don't just spray a little roundup or whatever on a tree and then the next day it's completely shriveled up this was a miracle obviously and obvious to Peter and he says hey Rabbi Jesus look that tree that you cursed is completely shriveled up now going back to why did Jesus curse this thing in the first place and there's this question of why did

[44 : 45] Jesus expect fruit and there are all kinds of ideas about you know well actually there were some fig trees that maybe would have borne fruit at that time of year but then it actually specifically says that you know it was not the season for figs so people have kind of different ideas I don't know that that really matters much because I think the big thing was Jesus was offering what an object lesson you actually see this with the Old Testament prophets right Jesus himself he's a prophet and so Jesus is doing what might be called a prophetic act we see this with some of the Old Testament prophets right who was it Ezekiel laid on his side for like over a year remember that imagine that's your job you gotta lay on your side for a year now I'm sure he probably went to bed at night but during the day he would lay on his side first on his right and then on his left for over a year and that was a prophetic act it was something that would take the words that he was speaking and really embed them into the imagination of the people who walked by him on the street every single day there's

Ezekiel he's lying on his side again that's weird but man you would remember that wouldn't you or how about Isaiah God told him I want you to take off your sackcloth and just run around in your skivvies all around Judea and prophesy and preach and he did that for three years barefoot and in his underwear I don't know what their underwear looked like back then or how immodest or whatever this was but it actually uses the term he was naked I don't think he was completely naked but he ran around without his regular clothes on and so again these kinds of things would embed into your imagination the words it would take those words and solidify them into your imagination to make them easier to remember and this is really what happened here with Jesus and what he did with the fig tree I mean Peter said look Rabbi what happened this is amazing and so first the lesson what is the lesson of the fig tree really I think this whole account ties in together the fig tree before it's cursed he goes into the temple and then comes back and there's this lesson this fig tree is dried up

Jesus curses the fig tree remember what does the fig tree represent in the Bible most of the time not always but most of the time it represents Israel and God constantly tells Israel you're like either a vine or some kind of fruit bearing tree or many times specifically a fig tree and you're not bearing any fruit righteousness and justice the fruit of righteousness and justice is not there and so Jesus demonstrates Israel being cursed by God Jesus actually tells this parable back in Luke chapter 13 so this is I don't know how long before this but while he was ministering up in Galilee Luke chapter 13 verse 6 for the sake of time you don't have to turn there but Luke 13 6 he also spoke this parable a certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard and he came seeking fruit on it and found none then he said to the keeper of his vineyard look for three years I have come seeking fruit on this tree and I find none cut it down why does it use up the ground but he answered so this was the the keeper of the vineyard he answered and said to him sir let it alone this year also once I until I dig around it and fertilize it and if it bears fruit well but if not after that you can cut it down and this is a parable about

Israel and three years how long was Jesus's ministry in Israel three years Jesus is looking for fruit he's preaching what the kingdom of God is at hand repent change your ways and God the father looks down and he said hey three years hasn't happened they haven't repented cut it down let's destroy this temple just like I told Jeremiah to say in chapter 7 of his book let's just destroy the whole thing just like we did back in Shiloh Jesus says the vine dresser the the keeper of the vineyard which represents Jesus one more year one more year we'll try and see if see if maybe they'll bear fruit and if after that one year they don't bear fruit then let's go ahead and just cut it down that's actually we see the storyline of the Bible after Jesus raises from the dead and he goes up to

heaven and there's just the ministry of the spirit there in

Israel and God's working remember Peter preaches to the people the rest of the 12 disciples this is their ministry and ultimately the Bible says that God cuts Israel off from the tree and he grafts in the Gentiles and that's a big part of the story the story of the Bible oh time moves so quickly doesn't it so the next the next section here because this all ties in and so I got to keep going here so this fig tree represents the faithfulness of the faithlessness of Israel and so there's this object lesson about Israel but then Jesus his response to Peter is not well hey here's the object lesson you know fig tree represents this no he doesn't respond that way how he responds is have faith in God and this I think is confusing to many people why is because Jesus goes in here into a lesson about answered prayer and having faith and believing what you say and making sure that you reconcile with your your friends and that you don't have unforgiveness what is that all about it's like he's moving on to a completely different subject matter seems like a very strange response but I don't think that's I think I mean it's it's very clearly here that Jesus answered Peter and so he's responding this isn't a completely separate teaching from related to the fig tree this is directly related and here I think is the the answer you see Jesus offered he did a miracle here in the form of a prophetic act he did a miracle wasn't necessarily healing anybody but it was generating a sign this was a sign for people to see in this case his own disciples but you know

[52 : 00] Jesus intended for his own disciples to have a miracle ministry he told them that you would and in fact they already had cast out demons heal the sick perform miracles even raise the dead but here's another example of something that he expected them to do I did this miracle for your benefit to embed something into your imagination some truth because I am a prophet and I am going to send you out as prophets as well you're going to do all the same things that I've done healing the sick raising the dead casting out demons but also you can do what I did here as well you can curse a fig tree and command it and he's saying this isn't something where I where you're going to pray and ask God well God if it be your will would you you know shrivel up this this tree says no I'm giving you authority you are my representatives and when you go out under my authority as prophets in my name I want you to speak to the mountain and expect what you say to happen that is the authority that I am giving you

Jesus said this thing in in in multiple places in John chapter 14 Jesus says this verse 12 John 14 verse 12 most assuredly I say to you he who believes in me the works that I do he will do also and greater works than these he will do because I go to my father and whatever you ask in my name that I will do that the father may be glorified in the son if you ask anything in my name I will do it I'm giving you authority I don't want you to ask God if it's your will he says listen it's my will I'm going to give you authority you're going to heal the sick you're also going to do things like this you're going to curse fig trees and watch them shrivel up because I'm granting you the authority many people will might look at these words and think well you know this is something for me in my prayer life you know if I if I have somebody in my family who's sick then I just need to try to believe enough and if I can and if I can do that then you know maybe a healing will come but

I think that takes this completely out of its context the context here is there's a prophetic ministry that the disciples have and they are given authority specifically to do these kinds of things don't ask just declare it I'll do it for you if you do that the other thing involved here is this whole thing of forgiveness and this is this is again in the context here of forgiveness Jesus is saying hey listen if you're at odds with with your brothers then your miracle ministry the ministry you have is going to be hindered and so you need to make sure that you maintain the spirit of unity and reconciliation forgiveness among one another I want to just briefly finish up with this because this passage on forgiveness really trips up a lot of people because what does it say if you don't forgive others their sins God's not going to forgive you yours and that was legit Jesus was saying listen this is important you need to be reconciled to your brothers and if you don't I'm going to withhold forgiveness from you that's a threat and a lot of people that's a scary threat isn't it and people sometimes do some pretty horrific things to us if we don't forgive them maybe we won't inherit eternal life this is where the transition and we've tried to make so many comparisons with the ministry of

Jesus and what kind of the rules were at that time and how things have changed in what we call today the dispensation of the grace of God what the Bible calls the dispensation of the grace of God which God has poured out his grace and doesn't require forgiveness for us for us to forgive to receive forgiveness and I'll end with this verse this goes back to the Romans 8 1 where there's no condemnation this is a similar idea but Ephesians 4 32 and be kind to one another tender hearted

forgiving one another so that God will forgive you is that what it says and I didn't I didn't take you to it so we didn't look it up but is that what it says I want you to forgive one another so that you can be forgiven is that what Paul says no opposite he says forgiving one another because or just as Christ already forgave you that amazing in Colossians chapter 2 verse 13 this is the big picture of how grace works

Colossians 2 13 and you being dead in your trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh he has made alive together with him you were dead now you're alive having forgiven you most of your trespasses and everybody's chuckling why it says all of your trespasses having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us which was contrary to us and he has taken it out of the way having nailed it to the cross not only did he forgive your sins past he actually took the law that was condemning us and it's gone it's taken out of the way and that confuses so many people was that you know you shall not steal that doesn't mean anything anymore well that's not what he's saying but no longer is this law no longer does it have the power to condemn you there is therefore now no condemnation because the law was taken out of the way nailed to that cruel cross on Calvary that amazing and so it can be easy to be confused right you read and this is in the red letters Jesus said it sometimes things change and things did change drastically when Jesus died on that cross and so we can rest right and even if we're really struggling man that person hurt me so much and I don't know if I can forgive them and is my eternity on the line is God really upset at me is he going to condemn me because of that but you know it's so freeing and and powerful too right when you've been forgiven of everything so much it's just like it's just so easy to forgive others and it comes so much more naturally it's it's it's a much better way of forgiving someone when not when you have to right not because it's required not because somebody threatened you but because I'm just so grateful for what God did for me and that really is how we ought to live the Christian life and what God intended for us and how he intends for us to live out that Christian life amen I have lots more to say but as pastor

[59 : 42] Marv always said I quit let's pray father thank you so much for your word and for the grace that you have outpoured on us that even though you have every reason and even in the past there were threats that kind of kept people in line but for us in this day you took care of everything and so when those when others sin against us and we might be struggling to forgive we don't have to worry about the threats we don't have to worry about our own eternal life our security in you we can just rest in you and have your life your love change us from the inside out that though it may be hard we can forgive others when they come to us and ask for forgiveness because you did the same thing for us and I ask that you would continue to work in our hearts to make us more like you in Jesus name amen all right thanks everybody for hanging out with me