

**Valley Bible Church**  
**Sermon Notes for September 3, 2017**

**Mark 11:12-26**  
**Cleaning House**

I. The fruitless plant (11:12-14)

*On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. 13 And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. 14 And he said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard it.*

- "On the following day, when they came from Bethany"
  - This is the day after the triumphal entry
  - Bethany was their home during the week of Passover
- "He was hungry. 13 And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it."
  - Jesus' hunger sparks the opportunity for this event
  - Jesus is drawn to a random fig tree that was "in leaf"
    - Fig trees normally were not in leaf for the three winter months
  - The fig tree in leaf drew Jesus to see if there were any figs on the tree
- "When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs."
  - This fig tree had nothing but leaves on it
  - Mark states that the reason that nothing was on it was simply because it was not the season for figs
    - The season for figs seems to be June-November
    - The time of year for Passover was April
- "14 And he said to it, 'May no one ever eat fruit from you again.' And his disciples heard it."
  - This is an odd reaction from Jesus?
  - He curses this fig tree so that it might never bear fruit again
    - Jeremiah 8:13 "When I would gather them, declares the Lord, there are no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree; even the leaves are withered, and what I gave them has passed away from them."
  - This scene is a bit of a head scratcher except for what Mark says at the very end, "And his disciples heard it"
  - Somehow it was important to note that the disciples witnessed this event, which of course was Jesus' intention all along
  - This was not a random moment of weakness for Jesus in isolation
  - It was an intentional display of disappointment due to this fruitless fig tree
  - The question is how so?

## II. The faithless people (11:15-19)

*15 And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. 16 And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. 17 And he was teaching them and saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers." 18 And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching. 19 And when evening came they went out of the city.*

- "15 And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple..."
  - This connects us to where we left off last week
  - At the end of the triumphal entry, Jesus came into Jerusalem, observed the situation in the temple, and then returned to Bethany
  - Now we see Jesus' calculated response after seeing the situation in the temple
- "And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. 16 And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple."
  - Jesus immediately acted in a bold way
  - There was a lot of activity on the Temple Mount
    - Buying and selling
    - Money-changing since many had Roman currency that needed to be exchanged to shekels
    - Selling pigeons (poor people sacrifice)
    - People carrying things
  - Jesus drove out those who were both buying and selling
  - Example: Like a stern father speaking to children, there was probably no resistance to Jesus' actions
  - Overturning tables and seats of the money-changers and pigeon vendors that were probably empty
  - Not only did He empty the Temple Mount of buyers and sellers, Jesus also prevented anyone with "something" from entering the temple area
    - This could have been people carrying more temple-related merchandise for the operation that was taking place
    - Or this could have been people who had become accustomed to the habit of cutting across the Temple Mount as a shortcut
- "17 And he was teaching them and saying to them, 'Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers.'"
  - Jesus did not just make a scene and then leave

- Jesus used the opportunity to continue to teach the people, many of which were possibly Jews that had not heard or seen much of Jesus (Judean Jews)
- Jesus' teaching draws on two different Old Testament passages: Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11
- First, Jesus quoted Isaiah 56:7 stating, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations"
  - This chapter in Isaiah 56 gives a picture of the future in Jerusalem
  - Isaiah prophesied a time when foreigners and outcasts would join to worship Yahweh at the temple in Mount Zion or Jerusalem
  - Interestingly enough, this was supposed to be a function of the temple according to Solomon's initial dedication 1,000 years prior to this moment (1 Kings 8:41-43)
- Second, Jesus appears to have quoted Jeremiah 7:11 saying, "But you have made it a den of robbers"
  - Jeremiah 7:8-11 "Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. 9 Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, 10 and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are delivered!'—only to go on doing all these abominations? 11 Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the Lord."
  - The Judeans had treated the temple like a shelter in a superstitious way
- In quoting Isaiah 56:7, Jesus affirmed that the temple was supposed to be a magnet for the nations to come and worship Yahweh
  - Obviously, this was not happening
- In quoting Jeremiah 7:11, Jesus admonished the people because the temple had become a false sense of security for a people with hearts far from God
- This was not so much a "cleansing" of the temple as it was a "pronouncement of judgment" against the temple activity
- "18 And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching."
  - Among those witnessing these events were the chief priests and the scribes
  - These were the leaders of the sacrificial system at the temple and those who were experts in the Law
  - They witnessed Jesus dismantling the activity on the Temple Mount and then clearly teaching the purpose for the temple from God's Word
  - They desired to destroy and kill Him

- This was because of the reaction of the people to Jesus' teaching
- The people were "astonished" at Jesus' teaching
- This struck fear into the Jewish religious leaders
  - Galilean Jews just welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem as the Messiah
  - Now Jesus was gaining the ears of the Jerusalem Jews
- "19 And when evening came, they went out of the city."
  - After exposing the flawed religious system and stirring up the hatred of the Jewish leaders, Jesus and the disciples returned to Bethany

### III. The full picture (11:20-25)

*20 As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. 21 And Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered." 22 And Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. 23 Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. 24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. 25 And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."*

- "As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. And Peter remembered and said to him, 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered!'"
  - Mark brings us back to the fig tree that we started with back in verses 12-14
  - The fruitless fig tree that was in leaf had now withered down to its roots
  - This was clearly a supernatural event that Peter noticed
  - How would Jesus respond?
- "And Jesus answered them, 'Have faith in God. 23 Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him.'"
  - Jesus responds by using this as an opportunity to teach His disciples
  - Jesus gives the command for faith
    - "Have faith in God"
  - Jesus then gives the ability of faith
    - Faith can throw mountains into the sea
  - Jesus also gives the attitude of faith
    - His illustration of moving mountains into the sea seems to emphasize the importance of truly believing and not doubting
    - "And does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass"
  - How does this relate to the fig tree?

- Perhaps the faith of the Jewish leaders and thus the nation was one of fragile belief, full of doubt
    - They doubted the reality of Jesus as the Messiah, who would deliver them from their sins and their enemies
- “24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”
  - As an application of faith, Jesus then taught the disciples to have legitimate faith in prayer
  - The Jewish leaders had demonstrated doubt in Jesus as the Messiah
  - Jesus now exhorted the disciples to demonstrate true faith in the way that they pray
    - This would be crucial for the future of these disciples
    - They would encounter some of the greatest hardship that the church has ever experienced
    - They would need to model true faith in their prayer life
  - Again, how does this relate to the fig tree?
- “25 And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”
  - Connected to praying, Jesus then addresses the area of forgiveness
  - One needs to not only have faith expressed in prayer
  - One needs to maintain peace with others through forgiveness
  - This action of forgiveness is so important that it connects to God’s forgiveness of the believer