

Cleaning House
Mark 11:12-26

As you're making your way to Mark 11, we'll continue on there starting in verse 12, and as you do that, just want to see if I can connect with you on a level. Somehow you may have experienced this, but there are times when you work together with other people, times when you're on a team, when you're in a group, as a family, whatever it might be, and in those moments, certain people are assigned different functions, different roles to play. They have different tasks or a purpose to fulfill, and whenever someone fails at fulfilling their purpose or their task or role, it kind of lets the whole team down, doesn't it? And hopefully, that's not been you in the past. Hopefully, you're not the weak link. You know that's not fun to be on the receiving end there, everyone mad at you because you let the team down, but it's not a fun experience when that happens, right? I could speak of this primarily on a team level through soccer, growing up, and having different players on the field at different times, different teammates that were good at fulfilling their role and others that were not so good. And it was particularly noticeable if it was, like, the goalie. And the goalie has a pretty important job here, just don't let the ball go in the net, and sometimes you have goalies that are really good at that, and other times, you have goalies that are almost the opposite. They're, like, giving the ball to the other team, and you're going, no!! Oh man, this is bad, all bad. And that is something that is so detrimental to the overall goal and task at hand for the team.

This morning we get to see an exposure. We get to see Jesus expose a weak link in the nation of Israel, specifically in Jerusalem among the leadership in the temple - this particular task that was supposed to be carried out, this role that was to be played, this purpose that was to be fulfilled, and we see Jesus exposing it for what it is, that is, the weak link not measuring up and not accomplishing the task that it was assigned. Let's read our text for this morning. We can get into this in Mark 11:12-26; "On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. 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. And he said to it, 'May no one ever eat fruit from you again.' And his disciples heard it. 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. And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. 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.' 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. And when evening came they went out of the city. 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.' And Jesus answered them, 'Have faith in God. 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. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. 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.' "

This is our text for this morning, and you'll notice that it's a little longer than the general amount of verses and content that we normally cover on Sunday mornings because we have another sandwich for us this morning. This is probably the best way to describe it. This is something that Mark has done from time to time as we've studied his gospel. He gives us this account that kind of functions like a sandwich. He introduces a topic, an idea, a person, some concept, and then he kind of veers away from it without really, like, giving you the wrap up on it, and he goes to something else, and then he comes back to it immediately after and wraps up whatever that concept or topic was. And that's what we have this morning. We have Mark portraying this kind of sandwich here for us that's revolving around this picture of a fig tree, a fig tree and the job of a fig tree which is to produce figs. Really, it's pretty simple. Don't give us something else. Don't give us a different kind of fruit. Give us figs. That's what a fig tree ought to do, and Mark uses this and highlights how Jesus takes this example and applies it in a parallel fashion to what was happening in the temple, to how the Jewish leaders were functioning which was not according to the purpose they were given as this tree even.

So, let's begin by looking at verses 12-14. That's where we see the fruitless plant - the fruitless plant is how we kick things off here; "On the following

day, when they came from Bethany...” That’s how we begin, and we’re reminded once again, because of this, of where we are in Mark’s gospel. We’re reminded that we’re near the end. We are in that final week. We are in Passion Week. This is the day after the triumphal entry. If you just remember and recall from last time, this is right after Jesus came in with all the Galilean Jews that came from the north and made their way down south. They welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem with this royal red-carpet welcome. Right? Hailing Him as King, the son of David, and making this known as they welcomed Him into Jerusalem. This is what happened the day before. And then, you remember, we kind of had an anticlimactic ending where Jesus came into the temple. He surveyed things. He looked around, and then He left, and they went back to Bethany about a mile away.

And now, we pick up today to realize what Jesus was doing in His surveying and investigating of the temple, and He is now returning to actually make a point, to perform some action, a calculated decision that He has in front of Him. This is where we are. Bethany was their home during the week of Passover. As all these Jews were coming from all over to Jerusalem, the city became so crowded that you just couldn’t find enough places to stay in the city. People had to stay outside the city in other locations. For the disciples, Bethany was that location. They went about a mile away, stayed in Bethany, had hospitality there, had food there, and then, the next day, they would wake up and do the same thing, come back into Jerusalem for the day’s activities and what laid ahead, specifically with Jesus’ interactions with the people there. This is what we have, them coming from Bethany, waking up and making their way to Jerusalem.

Looking back in verse 12, we catch the end of it Jesus was hungry; “...he was hungry. And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it.” Sounds pretty natural and normal and pretty straight forward as they were utilizing the hospitality of probably Mary and Martha and Lazarus there at Bethany. As they leave, they’re probably not wanting to eat all their food and demand a meal every time even early morning breakfast, and so, they’re on their way, and as they’re walking, Jesus is hungry, and He catches off there in the distance a random fig tree. There’s a random fig tree, and this isn’t just kind of anyone’s fig tree that’s on their property. It’s probably just random, literally, on the side of the road, and Mark tells us a little bit more. That it’s “...a fig tree in leaf...” alright? Not just a fig tree that’s kind of withered or waiting or trying to just kind of

hibernate until the time comes, but it was actually in leaf. So, Jesus does a very natural thing. He goes over. He goes to see if He can find anything on it, that is figs, some type of food. It's kind of interesting here. Fig trees normally were not in leaf for the three winter months, so this is around April. So, the winter months have passed, so it's very likely and possible that this fig tree was pretty normal to be in leaf. And if a fig tree was in leaf, that really meant that they could have figs although the normal time for producing figs would be in June which isn't quite there yet. It's still April according to where we are in Passover. Nonetheless, Jesus still investigates to see if there might be figs. This tree might be actually bearing some fruit since it has leaves on it.

We read on; "When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs." This fig tree had the leaves and had the appearance that maybe it might be bearing figs. It's possible. Jesus comes to see, and there's nothing. There are no figs on it. So, what does Jesus do next? Verse 14; "And he said to it [Jesus talking to the tree], 'May no one ever eat fruit from you again.' And his disciples heard it." It kind of becomes a head-scratcher a little bit. Jesus had a moment of going insane, some people might think (right?) or a very random tantrum in isolation. He has to go over there and just really vent, and so, when He would vent, He would vent to trees or something like that. You know, is this what's happening here? He comes and He curses this fig tree; "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." This strong statement – obviously, the point isn't to try and highlight that this is a disappointing tree, and we need to beware of disappointing trees like this. Mark gives us a further note here that we really need to attach to since this is the front end of the passage; "And his disciples heard it." His disciples saw this. This wasn't just Jesus getting randomly mad because He was hungry. This isn't "hangry" Jesus, right? This is Jesus actually making a point, as He has done so often, with an object lesson. It's an object lesson. It's an opportunity here, an opportunity for Him to use a picture, to use an illustration that they would latch onto. And that's what this is. This fig tree having leaves, potentially being able to bear fruit, and yet, there's nothing there. And Jesus curses this tree for not having fruit on it, and the disciples take note of it, wondering what this might mean. What is this referring to?

This is an intentional display of disappointment in this tree. So, the question is where do we go from here? How does this actually inform our passage. We read it. We see this fig tree comes back up again, but how does this

flow? How does this connect? Where are we going with this? And as is mentioned earlier, we have this picture here of a fruit tree not bearing fruit. And so, too, we will see a parallel with the Jewish religious leadership, specifically here at the temple in Jerusalem, failing to do their job like this tree. That brings us to verses 15-19, and that's where we find the faithless people. We saw a fruitless plant, a fruitless fig tree, and now we see a faithless people here at the temple. In verse 15; "And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple..." This was the goal of their journey, as they set out from Bethany early in the morning heading to Jerusalem, as they did all week. This connects us where we left off, the triumphal entry the day before, and now coming back in after observing, after taking note of the temple to ask Jesus, coming to His house to ask. And we see Jesus' calculated response, and as we have read and we know, it is not one of happiness or joy. It is not a positive response. We read on; "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. And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple." He's not happy. He immediately acts. He's seen already the day before what's taking place in this temple, and He comes back this morning, not surprised, but finding the same thing, and He steps into action - steps into action for what is ahead.

It helps for us to get a little bit, if we can try, to get a picture of what the scene looks like here. We have what is a potential depiction of Herod's temple at that time, what it looked like in its kind of grandeur there, this big building there, the temple and then this area all around it that people have often called the temple mount or the temple area. And some of your translations might actually say when Jesus went to the temple, it actually says "temple area," "so it's not necessarily just a building here. It's actually a little bit more than that. We have a diagram. You can see we have the building itself, the temple, and that was where you had the kind of very exclusive people limited to go in there like the priests. And then, to go into the holy of holies, that's the most high priest, right? The high priest would be the one who actually goes into the holy of holies, and then the priests into the area there of the temple building itself. And right around where you had the altar, and people would bring sacrifices, and they would actually offer them, that was the area for the priests, and as you extended it out further, you had an area where the rest of the Israelites, the rest of the Jewish men, could come, and as you expand it just a little further, you had the area where

the women could come, the Israelites, and Jews who were women could come. And then, you expand beyond that, and you have a larger area which is just kind of beyond. It's the outer court, the court of the Gentiles, those that are not Jewish, those that are not Israelite, those that are anything but Jewish, they are accessible there to the court of the Gentiles. So, this is kind of helping us now.

As we go back to this, we see the building there itself, when Jesus comes to do this event that is so popular and well known of cleansing the temple as we call it, He's not running into the building itself. He's up on the area. He's on the temple mount, and this is not a small area. If you kind of look at this, and if you were to kind of check some of the dimensions and give a best guess, this is larger than a football field. This is a big area, and Jesus comes to this area, and what does He find? A lot of activity - there's a lot happening, right? You just look at this. You've got people that are buying and selling. There's a lot of kind of business happening. You've got money changing taking place because a lot of people had different currencies as they came, and so you actually in order to even buy anything, you had to go exchange your currency. Or, if you're paying the temple tax - like males who were twenty years and older, they had to pay a yearly temple tax which would go to keep the priests doing their work in the sacrificial system there at the temple as God commanded in the Old Testament. And then, in exchanging your money and getting the correct currency, you could also buy sacrifices. In our text, it's pigeons. In other texts, you learn that there's other animals you can buy to offer up as your sacrifice unto the Lord. And then, you even had people carrying things. A very vague kind of explanation there of people carrying things. We don't know what these "things" are, if they're more temple merchandise or potentially they're just trying to short cut the temple mount, a big area, and if you're going through Jerusalem, you might be just wanting to try and get from one side to the other, and rather than walking all the way around, you just want to cross and just go through it. There's a lot of people there. We get this empty picture right here; that's not what it looked like. There was a lot happening, a lot of people, a lot of business, a lot of activity.

And how does Jesus respond? He drives them out. He drives out all those who were both buying and selling. It's not just the people sitting at the tables, it's not just the people making the money, He drives everybody out, those who are buying and selling. You kind of get this picture, and how does

this look? You know, is this a timid Jesus kind of coming up? Or, you know, how is this coming across? I think this is like a stern father addressing his children, and he speaks, and the children shut-up immediately, and they listen. They don't even try to back-talk. They might even run away because they're scared. This is what Jesus probably did; He approaches His temple, His house, and He says get out. And they can't help but be silenced by his presence there in the temple, and He begins to overturn these tables and these seats of the moneychangers and those that are selling the pigeons, probably emptying the place. And we start to think about this area. One man, one man is emptying and controlling the temple mount. It's amazing. This is the authority that Jesus carries with Him. People are not rebelling against Him. They're amazed. They're astonished. They're fearful of the authority He brings with Him. Even the people that are just trying to cross over and just trying to travel from one side to the other, they don't go around; they stop. He has control of this area.

And we think once again, is this a random tantrum? Is this Him just venting, having this moment here of weakness maybe in anger? Not necessarily. As we've already said, this is a very calculated decision. He's seen what's been going on. Even in John's gospel, we see that He cleansed the temple early in His ministry when He started His three years, and now, He's back three years later, and they're right back at it doing what they were doing when He cleansed it before. So, this is in fact His second time in doing this but it's purposeful. Look at verse 17. This is not just Him venting. This is Him with a purpose. Verse 17; "...he was teaching them..." "...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 had no desire just to come and make a scene and then leave. What good would that do, come make a scene and leave? The people thinking, what was that all about? Where'd that come from? Jesus came with the authority as He's done so often in Mark's gospel so that He can instruct. He can teach the people. He can actually impart truth to them because they're being led astray. He uses this opportunity. So many of these people, not all just Jews from Galilee, but some of them Judean Jews that are down there in the south and maybe only heard of Jesus, maybe only seen Him once or twice, them getting this exposure to Jesus and His teaching.

How does Jesus teach? He draws on two Old Testament passages. He encounters this broken system, what is set up here in the temple, what is

supposed to be this means of honoring and glorifying God, and it's completely awry. And He confronts it with teaching from God's own Word. First, He quotes from Isaiah 56:7 when He says, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations?'" Let's go to the simple text of what God has told us. What is God's plan? What is God's goal for His house? What is God's desire for this temple? That it would be "...a house of prayer for all the nations..." "...for all the nations..." Here we've seen in the court of the Gentiles, what do you have? Not any gentiles - you've got a lot of business and no Gentiles. In Isaiah 56, if you were to study it a little bit more and just read it really, at a glance, you realize it's a prophecy. It's a picture of God's desire for the future. Israel has failed. They have failed in the past. They're failing now. And God prophesied through Isaiah of a future day when there will be Gentiles that actually come to the temple because that's what God's desire was all along. You look back at 1 Kings 8 when the temple was first built under Solomon, a thousand years before this moment with Jesus, and Solomon in his dedication and his prayer. As the temple is built, he prays that gentiles would come, the world would come like a magnet to this place to know and to worship and to pray to the one true God, Yahweh. That was the intention.

Isaiah prophesied that would be the goal in the future, and here we are, Jesus confronting them, saying that's not happening now. You're a weak link. You have a purpose. You have not fulfilled your purpose. You've been assigned a task here at the temple in this sacrificial system as God has laid it out, and you're failing. You're failing miserably and leading people astray. Jesus goes the next step, not only reminding them of their purpose that they're missing, He quotes from Jeremiah 7:11 as well when He says, "...you have made it a den of robbers." "...you have made it a den of robbers." It is at least an illusion but more than likely a direct quote, and to understand this, it's helpful just to see all of what Jeremiah's saying there in Jeremiah 7:8-11. Jeremiah, in the time of Judah in the south, in prophesying to the people there, says, "Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, 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? 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."

In Jeremiah's day, he had to call out the people because of what was taking place, and it's not that they were in the temple doing robbing, it's the "...den of robbers..." So, a "...den of robbers..." is where they go to retreat. They go out from the den to do their robbing, and then they come back to the den to simply have security and safety. And so too, Jeremiah calls out the people of God and says this is what you do. You go out and you just indulge in your flesh and your abominations, and you commit your sins, and then you come back to temple, and you feel like it's your refuge. It's your safe place, and you say we're delivered because we're at the temple, and we got the temple and everything's cool with us and God, and it's all fine, and you just walk out from this place and engage in your evil and wicked ways again. In the same way, Jesus is now pronouncing this judgment upon the people here in the temple and this system of what's taking place. You missed it. You missed it completely. You're not a magnet. You're not drawing Gentiles to yourself. Instead, this is a false sense of security for you. You come to this place and you pat yourself on the back, and you think you're doing good, and then you go out from here and you commit your abominations. This is your den, and you're a bunch of robbers. This is what you're doing. You've missed it completely. You're not fulfilling your purpose, the task that you've been assigned here at the temple. It's been complete failure.

We often call this the cleansing of the temple, but it's not really a cleansing. It's a pronouncing of judgment because if Jesus wanted to cleanse the temple, He would've cleansed it. If He wanted to reform the temple and change things, He would've done that. That's not what He's doing. He's pronouncing judgment upon what is taking place. He's exposing the bankruptcy of this Jewish system at the time. They're falling so short, not a clue, completely off mark, and that's why He just has to remind them of God's Word and God's plans for this temple. We finally get a picture of the response in verse 18 from the people; "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." If you had people that would be kind of shaking and trembling, it'd be these two groups here, the chief priests, the ones that are in control of the sacrifices and everything that's taking place in the temple, and then the scribes, the experts in the Law, the people that should know, you know, texts like this. They should know the Old Testament, and they should know the purpose and the intention of the temple.

These leaders here, now fearful, scared, wanting to kill Jesus because He's coming in, and He's actually instructing the people in truth. The people are listening to this. They may actually go after Him. There's a new sheriff in town. They're losing their popularity. They're losing their authority. They're losing their control over these people because Jesus is exposing them and showing the truth. They desire to destroy Him. They desire to kill Him, not just the Galilean Jews that have affirmed that Jesus is the Son of God and the Messiah in His triumphal entry yesterday, but now these Jerusalem and Judean Jews, hearing a little more as Jesus talks about this and exposes the shortcomings of the system. In verse 19 we see, "And when evening came they went out of the city." The day ended, and they went back, and what they did throughout this week, they retreated. They left the city, and they went to Bethany to spend the night. This is Jesus' pronouncement of judgment. He's like a prophet that goes in, makes a scene to teach and instruct the people of God, and then He leaves.

In verse 20-25, we come back to this concept of the sandwich. How does this tie into the fig tree we mentioned and what Jesus has just done here on the Temple Mount? In verses 20-25, we get the full picture - the full picture. In verse 20, "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. This is not the accidental thing. This is an intentional thing that Jesus did and that Mark records for us. We're reminded of this fig tree that failed to produce any figs, and we've seen Jesus condemn and pronounce judgment on the temple that has failed to actually do what God has said, to actually draw in the nations, to actually have a system where people are worshipping God with their hearts and not just their lips. And now, we come back to this tree. It was clearly a supernatural event to have a fig tree that's in leaf, and then twenty-four hours later, it's withered to the roots. It's supernatural; thus it's noticeable, and that's why Peter calls it out. So, Peter takes note of this and says, what's going on here? This is the tree that you spoke to. We heard you, and it's dead and withered.

How would Jesus respond to this? In verse 22, "And Jesus answered them, 'Have faith in God. 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.'" As so often, Jesus takes this as an opportunity to teach His disciples, but here's the

key, He's shown His disciples a picture, a picture of how the religious leadership has failed them, the Jewish religious leadership. If it wasn't clear up in Galilee, up in the synagogues up there, if their legalism and obvious false worship wasn't clear then, it was clear now as Jesus walks into the epicenter, as He walks into the temple and He exposes how terribly off the path they had gone. He's shown that what they've ought to have been doing, they've not done at all. It's been a failure. As this fig tree has failed to produce fruit, so too has the leadership of the nation failed to obey God, failed to do what they too should have done. Jesus has exposed this, and what is crucial and critical here is that this is the beginning of Jesus showing it is time to be out with the old. It's time to be done with this old system. This system could never fully cleanse you and make you right before God, even when it's practiced in a correct manner. But what we have here is absolute corruption. So, there's no way that this system is actually going to bring them to a proper place before God. So, what Jesus begins to do is to teach the truth of the new covenant that He is bringing in. He begins to teach the change, the shift, that is coming, that they would be at the forefront of that. The disciples would be the ones who are the apostles that build the church upon this.

This teaching here becomes the substitute for what the temple was trying to do and failing to do. How so? He begins with this command, "Have faith in God." ... "Have faith in God." The very kind of foundation, the crux of the matter, the necessity for those who are to be the people of God to truly have faith in God. And He talks about how there's an ability of this faith, this faith that can throw mountains into the sea, given that it has the proper attitude, this illustration of mountains going into the sea, because someone is truly believing and not doubting as He says, "...and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass..." What have we had with the Jewish leaders? They get a picture of Jesus. They interact with Jesus. They get to talk with Him. They watch what He does, and do they believe? Far from it. They're full of doubt, skepticism. They won't embrace Him. They need to see more. It's not good enough. They've been full of doubt. There's been no faith at all from the Jewish leadership. The leadership has failed the people of God. So, now Jesus passes on to His disciples the new leadership, that you must have faith that has no doubting. Hard days would come. This would be necessary for them to have sincere and genuine faith.

How this faith looks is a great example of what He says in the application of prayer in verse 24; “Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” If you have this true, sincere faith, a great way to see it is how you pray, the way that you pray. You actually believe that you have received, that you have received what you are asking for. The Jewish leaders, again, had demonstrated this doubt, and this was their approach to God. Their prayers were worthless going up to God. Their prayers were more about exalting themselves than having anything to do with asking God for mercy or for help. The leadership had failed the one thing they ought to have done. This was crucial for these disciples to hear because they themselves would need to practice this kind of faith and this kind of prayer, and they themselves would pass this on to you and me as we are the church and the people of God moving forward from here.

And finally in verse 25, we have this reference to forgiveness; “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.” This necessity too of the horizontal - how you relate to one another - this is what the church of God must be committed to, absolute, complete, wholehearted faith in God alone in your vertical relationship with Him, pictured in true and genuine prayer, and also, absolutely, prayer that is heard, received prayer, that is answered because you are right with your fellow man. You are actually at peace and reconciled with one another. You have forgiven one another. It’s interesting that back in the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus is talking about coming to the altar with your offering, when you come with your sacrifice, and if you stand in line with your animal that whole time and you get to the very front. and you’re next in line with your offering and you realize you have something against someone, you need to leave. You need to go and be right. You need to be reconciled with that person before you try and come and worship and make that offering unto God. It’s the same thing here. It’s parallel, but there’s no mention of temple. There’s no mention of offering and sacrifice. Jesus is shifting away from the old, that which is old here is obsolete. He is ushering in the new where we can approach one another. And we ought to be at peace with one another before we try and pray and ask God to hear our requests.

These things that He’s mentioning here are things that, really, people were hoping to find at the temple. These were functions that you would hope to find at the temple in the Old Testament. When you wanted to pray to God,

and you wanted Him to earnestly hear your request, you would go to the temple and bring your request before Him. Jesus says just have faith, and do it now. You don't need to geographically move to a location. Pray now. Have faith without doubting in God. This is what you can have now, forgiveness. You come and you offer your animal, and you're hoping that that covers and atones for a time, that you can be right when you sinned against someone else. You come and you offer your animal again, hoping you can be right with them, and Jesus says just simply go and be reconciled now. Go and forgive one another now before you come back and pray in faith. There's a movement away from the temple because there's been a failure, an absolute failure on the part of the Jewish leaders. As the fig tree has failed to bear fruit, the Jewish leadership has failed to lead the nation correctly, and Jesus is now to bring in a new covenant.