

Mark 11:1-25 – What do Colts, Figs, and the Temple have to do with Jesus... and Us?

- What a text we have before us what is commonly called the Triumphal Entry and the Cleansing of the Temple sandwich in being this weird scene where Jesus curses the Fig Tree – *Love that one, I wish I had that power shame on you Figs that you aren't Bacon*
- So what is going on in this passage – **Well I am going to do something a little different today instead of making points I am going to ask questions of the text and then seek to answer them** – And just a word over the past couple weeks as I have dug in to this text I have been overwhelmed and once again STIRRED IN MY AFFECTIONS for Christ
- I would recommend every once in a while digging in to the texts more deeply than you might – *Even consider how you would dig in to it if you were going to teach and just see how it might stir your affections* – If you want to take me up on the challenge email me and I will explain to you how I dive in to a text to help you along!

Pray

Opening Illustration: CS Lewis once said that “*Christianity is the story of how the rightful King has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us to take part in a great campaign of sabotage*” – **There could hardly be a better description of what is going on in this text** – Although in many ways Jesus is taking great pains now, as opposed to earlier in Mark, to take off the disguise and instead to openly proclaim your rightful King is here

- That is what is going on in this Text as Jesus is making it unmistakably clear that the Messiah is here – *Now the people (even His disciples) still do not fully understand as it seems Jesus alone understands who He is and what He has come to do which is not to topple Rome but to crush the Serpent's head* – So lets look at the rightful Son of David entering His city!

Context: Jesus has now arrived where He had set His face to Jerusalem His final destination and this entry will inaugurate His passion week where Christ will fulfill His mission – *And is interesting to note that a 1/3 of Mark's Gospel will be dedicated to this week indicating to us that the Gospel accounts are not biography but instead Theological narratives making a point* – Which is Mark's gospel is that this is the Son of God a fact that even a Roman soldier at the end of the book will declare

- Now the countdown has begun as Jesus will no longer conceal His Messianic Identity and the die has been cast – **My dad says of this, “The Lamb who was slain before the foundation of the World will now be slain in space and time. The atonement for sin, ordained in eternity past, now becomes historical for all to behold”** –
- This must have been a pivotal scene what we call the Triumphal Entry because it is capture in all 4 Gospels – **Jesus has arrived for the Passover week in which the city of Jerusalem would swell in size with Pilgrims coming to town** – But this would be unlike any previous one for CHRIST THE PASSOVER LAMB HAS ARRIVED!

So 5 Questions of the text – *It'd be good to make sure you have the answer in GG or even go over it at home and then discuss in light of the answers what are the implications for our lives*

(READ v. 1-6) Question 1: Why 6 verses dedicated to finding a colt?

What is the significance of this scene and why so detailed – *Doesn't it seem just a little odd and even out of place for Mark, I mean who cares where the donkey comes from and if it has been ridden (THESE SEEM TO BE THE MINUTA DETAILS MY MOM IS CONCERNED WITH)* – Well this is to show the reader that Jesus is indeed who He says He is (The Messiah) and that He is in complete control of His destiny as He proclaims to the World Zechariah was writing about me!

- (V. 1) Jesus and the 12 come down the path from the mount of olives in to Jerusalem – **This is an awesome path as you are on the mount you have a great view on to the Temple Mount** – The mention

of The Mount of Olives here would have been significant because Zechariah 14 predicts this will be the place of final judgment as well as this is where Jesus will ascend from so Mark's mention here could be in order to draw our attention to Messianic claim of Christ!

(V. 2) Jesus sends two unknown disciples to the next village to find His colt and it was to be one that had never been sat on – *Colt here would have meant the young of a Donkey so not quite a fierce animal however we must not miss the details because they are proclaiming something to us* – The Significance of an unused animal harkened back to the OT where unused animals were regarded as suitable for religious purposes

- **The Ark of the Covenant was to be carried by unyoked users and even this was a claim by Jesus of Kingship as the Mishnah said no one else was allowed to ride a King's Horse – *So choosing this animal would have proclaimed Kingship but the choice is interesting because the young of Donkey was no war-horse but an animal better suited for a Child* – We once again in Jesus see the juxtaposition of Great Glory and Great Humility as we look at the one who will gain victory through humiliation!**

(V. 3 - 6) Jesus says if anyone tries to stop you from taking the colt tell them “The Lord has need of it” – *And this time the disciples who have been having some bad moments now have a redeemable one as they actually accomplish what they are supposed to* – I mean it is a low bar but good job disciples!

- **Even the Phrase the Lord has need of it was a Messianic claim as it was the same phrase that King David used when he and his men ate the consecrated bread at the temple – *Jesus is proclaiming the greater son of David has arrived* – And it is crucial to see that He has done so not as unknowing victim of what awaits Him but a willing participant as THIS ISN'T ULTIMATELY SO MUCH A TRIUMPHAL ENTRY BUT A DEATH MARCH!**
- **Why 6 verses – *Jesus is putting on full display of His knowledge of and commitment to the Scriptures and His control over events as He enters the city for the purpose to which He has come* – No one takes His life from Him He lays it down freely for sinners like us**

Implications: What does this mean for us – *If we are to follow the King we will be intensely committed to the Scriptures having the same High View of them that He has (know them better and better – so take me up on my challenge)* – And we must continue to see THE PATH TO GLORY IS THROUGH HUMILITY as we serve both this Ferocious and Majestic King who is also the one who rides in on a Donkey!

(READ v. 7 – 10,11 last) – Question 2: What is the significance of the actions and cries of the crowds?

So imagine this scene (Tell the story! George Washington?) – *Now imagine hearing this for the first time as the readers in Rome who had seen Caesar's triumphantly march in to the city on war-horses with captives behind them* – And then you learn your King did this on the humble donkey (Deity enters the City on a Donkey who's Kingdom will have no end even as the glory of Rome will soon fade (OH WE MUST LOVE THIS KING WHO IS UNLIKE ANY OTHER KING!))

- **The spreading of cloaks and branches before Jesus is the welcome of a King – *This is what the people of Israel did in 2 Kings 9 as they received Jehu as King* – The branches (which John identifies as Plam Branches) were symbolic of Jewish nationalism and victory which likely indicates the Crowd is thinking of Jesus as a political Messiah who will break the chains of Rome a thought that would seem appropriate at Passover as they remind themselves of their deliverance from Egypt!**
- **The cry “Hosanna” which means “Save us” or “Save now” have echoes of Ps. 118 which was a prayer of blessing for the coming Messianic Kingdom – *Jesus does not stop them but welcomes it even if they do not fully understand what they are saying Jesus understands what is going on* – Jesus understands the fulfillment of Zech. 9 and the real salvation that He is bringing**

Their cry of “*Blessed is the coming Kingdom of our Father David*” only appear here in Mark and has echoes of what Bartimaeus was shouting in the previous chapter – ***The crowd at least sees some connection***

between this man and the promise to David in 2 Samuel 7 that he will have a son who sits on the throne forever – The significance of the actions and cries indicate Jesus is a King to be received but sadly seeing from our perspective the crowd did not understand what they were doing

- Jesus has indeed come bringing salvation but it won't be salvation from Rome but instead will be a climactic victory over Sin, Death, and Satan – *Jesus alone knows the real significance of what the Crowd is shouting because He has come to deliver us not from temporal enemies (China!!!) but from eternal ones*
- The hopes of the people would soon be dashed as Jesus in just a few days time will surrender without a fight and be handed over and instead of being given a crown of God He will get a Crown of Thorns and killed but a new and greater Kingdom than they can even fathom will rise – Again this is not so much a triumphal entry as it is the beginning of His road to Calvary – *Jesus alone knows what is going on which reminds us once again that Jesus will be alone for the very hour for which He has come as soon the celebration will end and the crowds and even disciples will abandon Him and HE DID THIS ALL TO SAVE SINNERS LIKE US FROM A PROBLEM EVEN BIGGER THAN ROME! (That is one implication for us from these verses!)*
 - o Ferguson says, “Jesus has come to take His throne – but he has committed himself to begin His reign from a Cross”

(READ V. 11) – Interesting verse as it seems Mark is building to a climax and then ends anticlimactic – *Especially IF COMPARE IT TO MATTHEW’S ACCOUNT which says whole city was stirred and Luke’s which indicates the Rocks were ready to cry out and yet Jesus simply walks in and then leaves* – From the Author of action Mark this almost seems like a non-verse but it is actually filled with significance as Jesus has come to the city not as a tourist/Pilgrim to get caught up in the Euphoria of Passover or the grandeur of the Temple BUT AS ONE WHO HAS COME LIKE THE PROMISE MAL. 3 (The Lord will suddenly come to His Temple ... as a refiner)

- This non-verse, which at least a couple commentators believe “it was late” actually has a double meaning that the time was up for the Temple – *This verse is actually setting the stage for tomorrow as the calm before the storm* – That indicates to us what will happen tomorrow is no temper tantrum but is planned!

(READ V. 12 – 14) Question 3: Why does Jesus Curse the Fig Tree?

We will now see that Jesus’ first acts after being hailed King is to pass judgment on Israel through the cursing of the fig tree and temple – *The way Mark bookends the Temple narrative with Cursing of the Fig tree helps understand the significance of what He does in the temple* – SET THE SCENE!

- Jesus is human (He is no robot), yes Jesus is God, but everything it meant to be human Jesus was – *And so He can relate to me in my hunger even though I can't relate to Him in His choice of Figs* – But Jesus will use this as a teachable moment
- **What is going on here:** This is one of the most controversial miracles in the Scriptures (only one of destruction and the final one in Mark’s gospel) as one commentator said this scene seems unworthy of Jesus – *Is Jesus just pitching a fit cause He’s hungry like one of your children might do or I might do* – No, Jesus is not acting like a brat nor is he acting in malice but instead uses this moment for an acted out parable!

Now it may be shocking to you to know that I am not expert on Fig trees (shocking I know) – *But from what I have read the fact that the tree is in leaf should mean there is fruit and even if not fully formed fruit there should have been what is called PAGGIMS which were small green figs that could be eaten that would show up before the fully ripened fruit* – Thus and this is key from a distance the tree appeared to be fruitful but upclose it was shown to be fruitless

- Fruitful fig trees in the OT were sign of blessing – *So I don’t get the illustration but maybe just imagine a Bacon Tree overflowing with Bacon would be a sign of blessing and fruitfulness (BTW I think*

that is what heaven will be like) and also the Fig Tree was often used as a metaphor for Israel (Jer. 8)

– Jesus though on inspection sees a hypocritical tree that promised one thing of being fruitful but then was shown to have no substance

- **Jesus uses this tree to pronounce judgment on those appear to bear fruit but who are in fact fruitless** – And this scene gives a more full grasp of what is about to happen in the next scene – ***As ultimately this parable would be a judgment on the nation and on the temple as those who through religious activity appear to be fruitful but instead have become a showy, fruitless people!***

Implications or questions for us: Israel is shown to be a sham and they will be judged for it, but there is danger here for us – ***Are our lives marked by showy religion that gives the appearance of fruit with no fruit? ONLY YOU WILL ULTIMATELY KNOW IF YOUR ACTIONS SPRING FROM A LOVE FOR GOD OR FROM SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS*** (Matt. 23 would be good to read in GG)

(READ v. 15-19) Question 4: Why does Jesus wreak havoc in the Temple?

Set the scene (no one is prepared for what is about to happen) – ***The Temple was an impressive structure that was the center of Jewish life*** – Likely the part being talked about here was the area known as the Court of the Gentiles which is a place where people set up tables for money exchange (so the pilgrim could trade in currency to pay the temple tax) and tables to purchase animals for sacrifice (all of which wasn't the bad part) –

- **Jesus is likely outraged AND DRIVEN TO RIGHTEOUS ANGER** over the outrageous exchange rate (CATERED LUNCHESES) that is now in place – ***Making it difficult for true worship particularly for the poor and the Gentiles since all of this circus like activity was happening in the only part of the Temple where Gentiles were allowed to be***
- **In addition it seems (and only Mark mentions this) it seems this Courtyard has become a shortcut for people to pass through to get to other areas of the city faster** – ***Ponder this scene here is what Jesus is seeing the place where true worship was supposed to happen and where we people were to encounter the presence of God has now become a Bazaar rather than a house of worship for all nations (showing the Jews had very little concern for the spiritual state of the Gentiles)*** – And Jesus isn't going to stand for it and He begins to wreak havoc
- **The meek and Gentile Nazarene begins to flip over tables and refuse people to walk through it as a shortcut** – ***I mean imagine TONY over at the mall stopping people at the entrance and being like hu uh buddy not this way*** – Jesus is fulfilling Mal. 3 in purifying the Temple as the now the greatest High Priest exercises His rightful authority over the temple as Jesus says enough of the Charade of being a tree that appears to be fruitful but is a hypocrite!

Whats going on in v. 16 and 17 as Jesus uses this again as a teachable moment? ***It is more of the condemnation of the Temple than its cleansing as Jesus condemns their hypocrisy as they have trivialized and commercialized the Temple and in so doing have hindered the Gentiles from being able to approach God*** – **Jesus is horrified by this and has now fired the first shot at the religious establishment demonstrating to us that this was no spontaneous action but a planned event serving notice that the entire temple system is coming to an end (as not one stone will be left) but tear down this temple in 3 days I will build it back up as Jesus by His death on the Cross replaces where one encounters God as the veil is torn and Jesus emerges as the New Temple!**

- ***It is shocking that within a week's time the center of Jewish Faith will have become irrelevant in the eyes of God as a New Center is established where true worship is to be found and directed!***
- **(V. 18) The leaders see what is going on and they want to destroy Him because they feared what His authority might do to their status and power and even economic interest** – And so instead of seeking to be refined and purified they seek to destroy the purifier!

Implications for us:

- We are called Temples of God so Jesus has the right to make changes in our life just as He does the temple

- We should be concerned about the Nations – *Jews had a mistaken thought that the Messiah would come to clear the Temple of Gentiels whereas Jesus has come to clear the Temple for Gentiles* – That must have been good news to the original hearers and it is good news to us!

(READ v. 20 – 25) Question 5: Why does Jesus say what He does in response to the withered tree and what is He promising?

Some manuscripts add verse 26: *But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses*)

Now Mark returns to the tree and Peter notices it has withered at the roots even – *Jesus will now end the fig tree/temple scene with teaching on faith, prayer, and forgiveness the things that should have been found at the temple* – And in case we miss the connection between the tree and the temple lets listen to James Edwards: *The earliest commentary on the Gospel of Mark by Victor of Antioch in the fifth century...understood the event as an enacted parable, in which the cursing of the fig tree symbolized the judgment to befall Jerusalem. Mark's sandwich technique demonstrates that Victor of Antioch surmised correctly...he intends readers to see in the fate of the unfruitful fig tree the judgment of God on the unfruitful temple”*

- **Jesus here is making clear the impending judgment and curse on the Temple will be final and it will be replaced** – *Even His language here of “This mountain” is not referring to just any mountain but the Temple Mount that has hindered people from true worship and it will be removed-* (He wants the disciples to pray not as we would ask a Genie for something but as those who long for God to remove any thing in our lives that hinders our worship of God)

It may seem odd at first that Jesus concludes this episode with teaching on faith, prayer, and forgiveness but this has become an object lesson for the disciples have faith in God not the temple, God is the object of faith – *Now what is being promised here is he saying if you have enough faith you can curse figs*

- **Is Jesus using** (what is actually a Jewish hyperbole of a mountain to signify something impossible to be done) **to say that if you will just have enough faith God will grant you whatever you ask** – That is not what is going on here as we cant divorce His teaching from the context
- **This portion of Scripture has been abused by prosperity gospel preachers to say if you just have enough faith you will be financially prosperous or you will be healed of that disease** – *In fact that doesn't even fit with the rest of this book as Jesus asks in the garden “All things are possible for you... let this cup pass from me... nevertheless not my will by your will be done” and if anyone has enough faith for God to act it would be Jesus* – no that is not what is going on here that somehow if we believe strongly enough God is our cosmic genie!

Jesus is saying in context here do not let hinder you from bearing fruit and any obstacle that does if you have faith and ask for it to be moved it will be – *THIS WAS PARTICULARLY GIVEN FOR THE FUTURE WORK OF THE DISCIPLES AS GREAT OBSTACLES FACED THEM AND JESUS IS SAYING HAVE FAITH AND TRUST IN THE POWER OF GOD* – Faith then is utter dependence on God and that dependence should not be for what you think you need but should be prayed as we are taught in the Lord's prayer that we pray in line with what He thinks we need that is one way we HAVE FAITH IN GOD!

- **This is what IDC needs and this is what our missionaries need and what SLC need is not a genie but a God who is all powerful** – *not one who grants our every whim but one who removes any obstacles that hinder His/our mission even the gates of hell themselves will not thwart it!*
- **Tim Kller puts it like this,** “if I refuse to believe that God could turn me down, that is itself a failure to trust that His wisdom might be greater than mine, to be ‘totally sure’ that I will get exactly what I ask for, is really a lack of deep trust in God. This does not mean that the promise about prayer isn't extremely strong and encouraging. It is an invitation to God's people to attempt great things for God and move toward them with confidence through prayer. It is just that we cannot read it as a blanket guarantee of an affirmative answer for every specific prayer request”

- Prayer must be undertaken in the context of faith and finally must be set in the context of forgiveness – *interestingly this is one area where you will be able to examine if you are bearing fruit or if you are withering in bitterness* – This fits fully with the hyperbolic statement of moving mountains because often when real hurt has come true forgiveness is that difficult but this is what Jesus is calling us to!

Brothers and sisters we have talked about this often but this is a gospel issue – ***YOUR FORGIVENESS OR LACK OF FORGIVENESS IS A PICTURE OF HOW WELL YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED IN THE GOSPEL*** – And Jesus doesn't say the really top notch Christians get this instead He says, "Blessed are the merciful for they will receive Mercy!"

- **And notice forgiveness is demanded here whether the offender asks for forgiveness or not - *other places show that one should try to reconcile with the offended or offenders if at all possible but Jesus shows us here that forgiveness is on us even if the other party has never repented*** – Tim Keller says, "Forgiveness is thus to be granted before it is felt. Forgiveness is a promise not to bring the matter up to the other person, bring the matter up to others, or continually bring the matter up to yourself."
- **Brothers and sisters if we are going to live life together for the glory of God we have to get this down because there will be sin, there will be hurt, there will be offense – *What are we going to do when that comes? Forgive, how can we?*** Meditate on the gospel forgive as you have been forgiven so much in Christ – THAT IS THE GOSPEL!
- **When you refuse to forgive it is saying that that is an indicator you do not understand how much you have been forgiven – *This can stand in the way of our mission*** – lets pray that these mountains will be removed!

Conclusion – The Messiah has come and He has come not to overthrow Rome but to replace the Temple as the place where men encounter God and where true worship is directed – *And He climatically replaces the temple as the blood of bulls and goats and pigeons could not accomplish what Jesus accomplished that day outside the gates (PROPRITIATION!!) - and when He was done unlike all the other High Priests He sat down at the right hand of God as the once for all sacrifice*

- **How you relate to this King makes all the difference – Unbeliever “Have Faith in God” – Have faith that this one is the only one who brings salvation from sin and all you need to do is turn to Him admitting and confessing I am sinner I need mercy!**
- **Believer – The scriptures teach that the church is now that temple lets be zealous about **removing any obstacles** that hinder our fruitfulness and lets be **passionate about the nations** coming to the better Temple where they can encounter the Living God**

And for all of us lets remember that soon and very soon the Eastern sky will split open and there will be a true Trimpal entry as our King will once again put His feet on Earth's soil and it will be quite different this time around there will be no mistaking what is taking place (Carson and Graham???)

- ***The first time he came to die, the second he comes to reign***, the first time he came on a donkey the second will be on a war-horse in white, the first time he came as a servant the next as a king, he came in weakness, but the 2nd time he will come in power, the first time he came to make peace the second he comes to make war, the first he was given a crown of thorns, the second a crown of gold, the first he was the suffering servant held up on a tree for all to see, the second he will be the King of Kings!
- **READ REV. 19? – beloved the rightful King has landed....AND will soon return and to that we saycome quickly Lord Jesus!**