

## **Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Mark 11**

Today we begin to look at the last week of the life of Jesus, beginning with his arriving into the city of Jerusalem. The first thing we see here, Jesus sends two of his disciples to the village ahead of them to bring a colt that nobody has ever rode on. A young animal such as this was considered worthy of a holy purpose. Kings come into town on horses but not Jesus. Jesus is a different kind of King. Jesus came in on a donkey as the crowd gave Him a King's welcome. They spread their clothes and palm branches on the ground, all the things they would do to show respect for a King. Jesus came in peace and showed humility. As such the crowd shouted Hosanna...which means, save us. Jesus rides in as a King, the King for all people for all time.

After his entry, Jesus went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve. He didn't do anything. Just looked around. The next day as they returned to the temple, Jesus was hungry. He saw a fig tree in leaf, but when he got to it, he saw no figs. So, he cursed it. What's going on? There are two kinds of fruit that a fig tree bears. As the leaves came in, the tree would grow little 'pre-figs'. You could eat these. And, of course, later on, the fig tree would grow ripe figs. So, though it wasn't the season for figs, the leaves indicated it was the season for these little pre-figs. But the tree didn't even have that. By cursing the tree, Jesus simply stated the obvious. It's a dead tree, no matter how full the leaves are.

This fig tree, though full in leaf, was useful only to cover nakedness. The temple in Jerusalem was much the same. What appeared full of life was actually lifeless. Jesus wants his disciples to see this. It is possible to be outwardly religious and inwardly dead. The fig tree illustration is important because what he says to the tree becomes true the next day. It withers. No one eats from it again. We can see that this elaborate buying and selling and money-changing operation, that was going on in the temple, is a scam to make money off worshipers who only want to meet with God. Jesus doesn't only reveal what's there, he does something about it. He drives out what shouldn't be there. He overturns what doesn't belong. The temple deadness is not a problem Jesus could ignore. He had to confront it and it is vital that we know that.

The temple became a place where it was hard to find God. This can happen inside a church too. When a church becomes a place where it's hard to find God, it becomes something other than what God intends. That's why Jesus says, "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." The place that was meant for finding freedom in God became a place where it was hard to find God. If God's church is a house of prayer—a house of worship—then everyone is welcome and faith is evident. This is something Jesus desires for us and is willing to fight for, and ultimately, die for. This act of cleansing

the temple cost Jesus. Look at verse 18. “The chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him.”

The fig tree represented the temple, especially her leaders. As a result, the temple was dead and worthless. It withered. So, when they passed by the fig tree again and it had withered away to its roots, Peter pointed it out, and Jesus responded in a really significant way. But why is he talking about faith and prayer and moving mountains and forgiving? How does it have any relation to the fig tree and to the temple? The point is that we need another way—we need to be trees that bear fruit. How are we going to get that? Jesus’ answer is to have faith in God. That God is so faithful that he will not disappoint us, if we have faith in him. He will carry out with certainty, his desire for us and that with him nothing is impossible. And his will for us is good and perfect.

That’s what is so significant. Jesus replaced the temple as the object of faith in God. With Jesus as our access point to God, we can be sure it will never be compromised. And therefore, we have the assurance of forgiveness. When we are willing to forgive we will receive forgiveness. If we do not forgive others we deny ourselves God’s forgiveness for our sins. And without Jesus, forgiveness could not have been possible. Therefore, the only thing keeping us from him is our pride, our false conception of ourselves, our self-righteousness. But we can give that up. Why settle for anything less when we can have real righteousness in Jesus?

How can we get that? Jesus tells us right here, look at verse 24, ‘whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.’ It’s an offer to put our total trust in Jesus as Saviour and Lord and to find total cleansing and forgiveness before God. This is Jesus’ offer to come into our dead heart and drive out what doesn’t belong. And Jesus won’t reject an open heart, that comes to him by faith, willing to forgive others and comes to him on their knees in prayer.

So, as we close, the only question remaining is simple, do you want to come to Jesus, to welcome him and receive him? The One to save us is here, He has come, He has come to save us and to deliver us. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

God’s grace and peace be with you.

Bobby