

C. Have faith in God: "And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass; he shall have it. Therefore I say unto you, All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (11:22-25).

1. Because of the mountainous task upon which the apostles were about to enter, Jesus chose to express the purpose of his miracle of judgment, which went to "the roots" of the fig tree, in the form of a lesson on the power of God available to him who prays to God acceptably.
2. Though Christians today do not possess miraculous powers, there is strong affirmation here of the prevailing power of fervent prayer.
3. As we stand today facing the problems confronting us, let us never forget to set our minds on "the things above," and especially toward the God in heaven who is greater than every adversary (1 John 4:4).

D. When ye stand praying: "And whensoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any one; that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses" (25).

1. Jesus had earlier enjoined forgiveness as a condition of prayer (Matthew 6:12; 18:35).
2. Here, in his final week, and in connection with a miracle of judgment teaching the certainty of God's power, he chooses to connect the need of forgiveness with the availability and sufficiency of God's power.

STUDIES IN MARK--LESSON THIRTY-THREE  
The Barren Fig Tree Cursed and the Temple Cleansed  
Mark 11:12-25

INTRODUCTION -

I. LESSON LINKS AND CONTEXT.

- A. As the royal entry was on Sunday, these events took place Monday.
- B. It was a busy, meaningful, final week which climaxed the Lord's life.

II. NATURE AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE LESSON.

- A. This lesson demonstrates the royal authority of the King of kings.
- B. It is a lesson about a tree and its fruitfulness, demonstrating the certainty of God's coming judgment upon the sin of barrenness.
  1. To be fruitless is to be worthless, which thwarts God's purpose (Eph. 2:10).
  2. Fruitlessness is a form of ingratitude indicating that the time, space, ground and care occupied is wasted (Heb. 6:7,8).
  3. Fruitlessness belies the Christian's profession (Acts 10:38; 1 Peter 2:21).
- C. This is a prophecy of God's rejection of Israel as a nation.
- D. This is a most needed lesson on the power of God available to him who prays acceptably (11:22-25).

DISCUSSION -

I. THE BARREN FIG TREE CURSED (11:12-14).

- A. He hungered: "And on the morrow, when they were come out from Bethany, he hungered" (12).
  1. Jesus spent the nights in Bethany that last week and went into Jerusalem each day with his apostles (v. 19; cf. Matt. 21:17; Luke 21:37).
  2. They had perhaps left Bethany before breakfast that day (John 4:34). The fact that he hungered, however, is an indication of his humanity.
- B. Nothing but leaves: "And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for it was not the season of figs"(13).
  1. This type of tree normally produced figs before leaves; hence the presence of foliage (perhaps earlier than other trees) was an indication or

promise of fruit on the tree (though not necessarily ripe fruit).

2. There is in this an indication of hypocrisy: in that the tree's leaves were a pretension of fruit which was not present.

3. "Not the season of (ripe) figs."

C. No fruit forever: "And he answered and said unto it, no man eat fruit from thee henceforward for ever. And his disciples heard it" (14).

1. Hungry, and evidently disappointed (?), Jesus cursed it with perpetual barrenness--a lesson of deep signification to every Christian to the end that our performance always match our profession (James 4:17).
2. Peter calls this miracle of judgment a "cursing" (11:21).
3. This is a warning of God to his people that we are created in Christ Jesus for a purpose: To bear fruit.
4. God has granted all things unto us which pertain to fruitful life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3), and barrenness is a result of our failure to add with all diligence the graces which make us fruitful.

## II. THE TEMPLE CLEANSED (11:15-19).

A. Into the temple: "And they come to Jerusalem: and he entered into the temple and began to cast out them that sold and them that bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves. And he would not suffer that any man should carry a vessel through the temple" (15,16).

1. Jesus was of the tribe of Judah, not Levi, and could not enter the temple building itself, Holy or Most Holy place.
2. The portion he cleansed was evidently the enclosed court surrounding the building. Jesus had cleansed the temple three years before (John 2:13-17).
3. All the temple was sacred; but verse 16 indicates they had made it a mere passageway, or short cut, to carry out their secular business.
4. Jesus drove out the animals earlier (John 2:15); this time, "them that sold and them that bought."

B. A house of prayer: "And he taught, and said unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations? but ye have made it a den of robbers" (17).

1. Jesus, God's Son, was Lord of God's house, and

would not allow it to be desecrated.

2. It was especially set apart by divine precept for the worship of God (Isaiah 56:7).

3. But they had so profaned its sacred purpose as to make it a robber's den for the fleecing of God's flock as it (they) came to worship.

C. They feared him: "And the chief priests and the scribes heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, for all the multitude were astonished at his teaching" (18).

1. Angered and awed by his action (and their own consciousness of guilt), which was a severe rebuke to their tolerance of this desecration of the sacred, they yet respected his demonstrated authority.

2. They began secretly to seek a way "to destroy him."

D. "And every evening he went forth out of the city" (19).

1. He lodged in Bethany at night (Matt. 21:17).
2. Luke 21:37: "in the mount that is called Olivet."

## III. THE FIG-TREE FOUND WITHERED (11:20-26).

A. From the roots: "And as they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away from the roots" (20).

1. That was evidently the first time they saw the effect of the Lord's action (See Matt. 21:19).
2. This miracle is symbolic, a sort of parable in action: Of what the Lord sought and found in (a) the fig tree; and (b) in Israel; and (c) of what God seeks and finds in Christians now. What does he find?

B. Withered away: "And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Rabbi, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away" (21).

1. Cursing here does not indicate an act of anger, or malice, but of doom: Its destruction was complete, "withered away."
2. The disciples marvelled at the suddenness and fulness of the Lord's power thus expressed in judgment at barrenness.
3. Since all the Lord's prior miracles had been miracles of mercy, Peter sought a discussion concerning this one.