



# LIFE NEWS

The weekly newsletter article of Parkside Chapel

## THE FRUITLESS FIG TREE

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As we approach Palm Sunday and Easter, we focus on our King Jesus, his death and resurrection. We see Jesus enter the city of Jerusalem to cheers on Sunday, only to be crucified and buried on Friday. The events between these events are tremendous and are the focus of much of the four Gospels. Each of these books slows to a creep as they approach the death of Christ. The tension builds as each day of the week is described in detail, helping us to understand who Christ is and why he has come to earth.

In Mark 11, we get the description of Jesus on the Monday of Holy Week. Jesus enters the temple as a king on Sunday, takes a look at the temple, and makes his way back to Bethany. On Monday, Jesus will make his way back to the temple. He and the disciples get up and head to Jerusalem. In this story, we get two parallel stories: 1) the fruitless fig tree and 2) the cleansing of the temple.

Both stories show us the same truth about Christ. In the first story, as Christ is on his way to Jerusalem with his disciples, they see a fig tree. Jesus, being hungry, goes to pick a fig; the tree has no fruit. Jesus

curses the tree by saying, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again!” The story seems to end as we enter the temple with Jesus and the disciples.

Jesus enters the temple and immediately throws the money changers and those selling in the temple out of the temple. As Jesus kicks these people out, Mark says he was teaching them that the temple was meant to be a house of prayer, and they have turned it into a “den of thieves.” Jesus occupies himself with this task for the entire day. He refuses to allow these people back in; this is noticed by the chief priests, and they decide that Jesus must die because the teaching scared them.

Here we find the first parallel of these stories. The people of Israel have been compared throughout the Old Testament to a tree. We have the chief priests of the day who have desecrated the temple and have allowed this den of thieves to exist. The priests make it obvious that the tree of Israel is not bearing fruit. While their king is standing before them – cleansing the temple as many kings had done in the past, such as Josiah. Their response is not to repent and turn to

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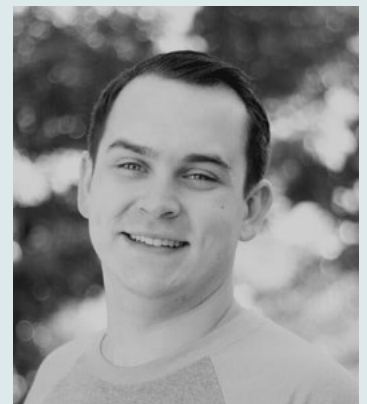
God; instead, their goal is to kill this new King. To maintain their power, they must get rid of the King. They show that they have the same mindset as the people of Israel in the Old Testament and that they will kill everyone sent by God, including his own son.

Further, we must ask what the fruit is. The fruit cannot be the outward expression from Palm Sunday. These same people agreed to crucify Christ on Good Friday. The fruit cannot be sincerity in the holding of a system, or the priests would be fine. Instead, we find from Hebrews that the fruit that is missing is faith. The priests and people of Israel are represented by the fruitless fig tree. The priests show that they have no fruit because they watched as their servant King came into the city on a donkey, they watched as he cleaned out the temple, and their response was not to recognize who he was and what he came to do. They decide instead to get rid of him.

This is how Jesus explains the fig tree to his disciples. The next morning they passed the tree and found it withered. Notice the priests have not decided to change their position but will not be able to bear the fruit of faith. Jesus tells them that what they ask in prayer – even moving a mountain – will be done for them. Jesus ties this miracle to their faith. If they have

faith, their prayers will be heard. This is true not only for the mountain but for our salvation. Before Christ, we are dead in our sins. When we have faith in God, we are raised to new life. We are made alive. This miracle can only occur through faith in Christ. We are all fruitless fig trees until our faith is in Christ.

As we move toward Easter, this is the message of Christ... that life can only be found through faith in Christ. Because of this reality, we are called to believe, share, and spread this good news.



*by Jeremiah Shawver, Youth Pastor*