

Mark 11:1-33
Lynchburg, Virginia
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EXHORDIUM

The first 10 chapters of Mark have covered the life of Jesus and His entire three year ministry. The last six chapters slow down considerably, covering the last week of Jesus's ministry. Mark obviously has reason for writing the book this way. The final week of Jesus is set in contrast to the rest of His life. In this gospel, Mark has been showing us how Jesus is, in fact, the promised Messiah, the Son of David, the one who will sit on David's royal throne.

The disciples come to believe this but their way of doing things is constantly contrasted by Mark with the teaching of Jesus.

This chapter is the transition from Jesus's earthly ministry to the final showdown with the scribes and Pharisees and the leaders in Israel. In this showdown, it appears that Jesus loses and that His opponents win. But that is the point that Mark is trying to reveal to us all along. God's way, Jesus's way, is not the way of the world. In God's economy, service unto death is the way to victory. It is not defeat.

We need to also understand that this way of the cross is not just death that leads to an after existence in the sky. That is not Mark's point about what Jesus is doing. This way of the cross is the way to victory here on the Earth. When Jesus died on the cross, He overthrew the enemies of this world; the devil and all of those doing the devil's work. Then He commissioned His disciples to go and tell the world what had happened.

His disciples fulfill that commission and begin to spread that gospel to the very ends of the Earth. As a result, the church, under the authority of Christ, has become all that the Temple was supposed to represent, a house of prayer for all nations. The failure to do this is what brought the judgment of God down on Israel and the Temple.

We need to understand this as we take a look at this chapter. There is a lot here but it does all hang together as one story.

EXEGESIS

11 And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples, 2 And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him. 3 And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither.

The colt here is a donkey. Solomon was seated on a donkey and rode into Jerusalem. This signifies the rightful kingship of Jesus.

Jesus commands His disciples and they obey Him.

4 And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him. 5 And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? 6 And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go.

The disciples do not argue with Jesus. They simply do what He says. They seem to have finally figured out that Jesus is King and they simply must obey Him. The people also recognize the authority of Jesus.

7 And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him. 8 And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way. 9 And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: 10 Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.

Jesus is seated upon the colt for the Triumphal Entry. This is a repeat of what occurred when Atioches Apiphanes entered Jerusalem.

Welcome to Jerusalem, King Jesus, Son of David!

Quote from Psalm 118. Also include 'bind the sacrifice with chords, even unto the horns of the altar.'

11 And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

Jesus's two visits to the temple surround the story of the fig tree. We should understand that Mark is trying to tell us that the fig tree is the temple and temple worship. Since it has not produced the fruit that it was supposed to produce, it is going to be cursed and die.

Perhaps the disciples were disappointed in Jesus. He visits the temple but makes no attempt at a coup or Herod's palace or Pilate's residence.

12 And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: 13 And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. 14 And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

The Lord was hungry for the fruit of the fig tree. But having come for the fruit, He found none. He cursed the tree so that it died, never producing fruit again.

15 And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; 16 And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

Jesus did not do this because carrying anything through the temple was sinful. He did it as a parable to show that the temple worship was being condemned altogether. His anger here is not directed at commerce. It is directed at the disobedient shepherds of Israel.

17 And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves. 18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people

was astonished at his doctrine. 19 And when even was come, he went out of the city.

The temple was not just a house of prayer but rather, a house of prayer for all nations. Isaiah 56:7.

The great sin of Israel was a failure to be a light to the Gentiles. God had meant to bring blessing upon the entire Earth through His chosen people. Instead, they would not shine the light and had become like the brigands, the nationalistic zealots, who were crucified with Jesus.

20 And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. 21 And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away. 22 And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. 23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

The cursing happened just as Jesus had said. The figless fig tree died. Just so, the fruitless temple worship was also about to die. Furthermore, the imagery here is stark. The mountain that would be cast into the sea is the mountain of the Lord. God Himself, through the prayers of the saints, would bring this judgment upon Israel. The floods of invasion would surround Israel and the temple of the Lord would be drowned in the sea. This seems an odd thing to say. Is this not the Lord's temple. The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord. But God desires obedience and not sacrifice.

This was another admonition to believe that Jesus is indeed the Messiah. If you believe, then you will see these things come to pass.

24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. 25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. 26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

So, we ought to pray in the will of God for deliverance from our enemies. But we do so without vengeance in the heart. Even though enemies are real, we always stand ready to forgive those who have wronged us, just as our Father in heaven has forgiven us. Our desire is for repentance just as His desire is for repentance.

This certainly can be taken as a general principle. If you harbor bitterness in your heart towards others, you will live in a constant state of unforgiveness, both towards them and from God.

27 And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, 28 And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things? 29 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. 30 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me. 31 And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him? 32 But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed. 33 And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

Jesus preached by God's authority and that authority was passed on to Him through the baptism of John the Baptist.

The chief priests, scribe and elders are so far gone that they can no longer answer simple questions without calculating their own political benefit. We have many ministers and politicians who are just the same.

If John's baptism was from heaven, then Jesus has authority from heaven. If John's baptism was from men, then Jesus has no authority. But it was from heaven.

Blind leaders of the blind. You cannot tell? Or you will not tell? You know it was from heaven and yet you resist heaven. This is why the temple will be destroyed!

EXHORTATION

I want to leave you with two things to think about regarding the teaching of Jesus from this chapter.

1. First, the kingdom of Christ is the Kingdom of the Earth. It is the will of God to save the entire Earth. If we think that way, then we begin to understand what God is doing in the world. If we think that the gospel is only for a select few, the frozen chosen, or those select few who exert their good free will to choose Christ, then we misunderstand the power of the Righteousness of God. If we put this salvation of men squarely into the hands of men, then we have missed not only what God is doing but also the very essence of the power of the Holy Spirit in the world. We need to understand that God is doing a marvelous work and then conform our thinking, our wills, and our acts to the will of God to accomplish this task. God is doing it but He does use His people to accomplish His goals. In my opinion, this is the only way that we can have enough confidence to move forward with this otherwise impossible task.
2. Second, God is faithful and just to forgive sins. We must strive to be like God. He forgives the sins of His people, even when those sins have gone on for years and are very serious in nature. As Christ moves towards the cross, we need to understand that Christ died so sinners could be forgiven before the Father and their sins justly dealt with through atonement. But it is not just our standing before a Holy God that was in view. He makes it clear in this passage that those benefits that we receive from God must be passed on to our fellow men. Even more than that, if we refuse to pass on those benefits, then we have become like unbelieving Israel, hoarding God's blessings until He takes them away. This is deep theology but it is basic practical Christianity. No one has offended you as much as you have offended God. How do I know that? I know that because God is perfectly holy. Any sin against a holy God has dire consequences, the kind of consequences that require His Son do die to set you free from paying for that sin. But when people sin against you, that is not the case. You are not intrinsically holy. You are likely to have sinned against them in just the same way. How can you, who have done and continue to

do such things, withhold forgiveness from someone who has slapped your hand when God has forgiven you for slapping Him in the face? It is the height of hypocrisy to fail to forgive your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Furthermore, a failure to forgive binds you up. You are not free if you are not forgiven but you also are not free if you fail to forgive. Bitterness becomes locked in your soul and it taints every part of your being until you are simply foul. God wants to set you free. This is why He has forgiven you and requires that you let that bitterness go by forgiving others. So, let it go. Forgive and be free.