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Matthew 21:18-46  
1/31/24

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. We often get concerned with our “leafy appearance” instead of our actual fruit? If we know what God wants, why do we still do that?
  2. About prayer, could you grow more in praying by faith without doubting or in humble submission to His answer of “no”?
  3. Thinking about the pharisees, when might a spiritual conversation be a waste of time? How could we know?
  4. What kind of real fruit do you think Jesus is looking for in us?
  5. What from this chapter can you take home and apply?
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### **Teaching Notes:**

After Jesus has entered Jerusalem to praises of Hosannah...  
...and cleansed the temple rebuking them for making the temple a den of thieves instead of a house of prayer...  
...this happens...

**21:18** Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry.

Jesus was human. Humans get hungry.

Jesus is God and God desires fruit.

**19** And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, “Let no fruit grow on you ever again.” Immediately the fig tree withered away. **20** And when the disciples saw *it*, they marveled, saying, “How did the fig tree wither away so soon?”

### **What is the significance of the fig tree?**

The fig tree often represents the nation of Israel.

Jesus has come desiring fruit but finds none.

God has come looking for fruit but finds none.

The fig tree is judged for it’s lack of fruit...

...and so also will be Israel and the temple.

The temple and religious activities seems “leafy” but have no fruit.

Now the disciples marveled that this happened so quickly.

Mark tells us it was the next day.

21 So Jesus answered and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done. 22 And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”

Some would say, being that they are in Jerusalem...Jesus is speaking of the temple mount.

**Others say mountains are challenges or problems.**

V22 Whatever you ask in prayer believing, you will receive.

We don't build entire doctrines from one verse.  
But we also don't dismiss it as without importance.

This is not a blank check dependent just on your faith.  
God is the one who hears our prayers and acts.

**Pray with all faith and leave the results up to the Lord.**

23 Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?”

24 But Jesus answered and said to them, “I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things:

*Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Lest you also be like him. 26:4 Proverbs*

**If they could answer truthfully, He would answer truthfully.**

25 The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?” And they **reasoned** among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ 26 But if we say, ‘From men,’ we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet.” 27 So they answered Jesus and said, “We do not know.” And He said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

**This revealed their inconsistency to walk in the truth.**

Liars have to **reason** a response.  
Honest people just tell the truth.

**They live hiding behind their religious appearance.**

But when they have to stand and give an account...  
...there is no place to hide.

Jesus tells them, if you can't be honest in your answer with Me, I am not going to be honest with an answer for you.

**They were like the fig tree...**

They appeared to have religious life in their leaves...  
...but they were really fruitless fakes...

**But now Jesus turns back to His teaching w/ them in mind...**

**28** "But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.' **29** He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went. **30** Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go. **31** Which of the two did the will of *his* father?" They said to Him, "The first."

This is a clear shot at the Pharisees...

It is better to repent eventually doing the will of God than to be the one who plays the hypocrite saying one thing and doing another

**Spiritual words without spiritual work is worthless.**

**But this can give us all such hope!**

God desires obedience and delights in it when it happens.

And now Jesus nails it home with another reference to John...

...Jesus said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. **32** For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw *it*, you did not afterward relent and believe him.

Jesus declares clearly, John came in the way of righteousness.

**But who did believe? Tax collectors and harlots.**

Relent and believe is a thought-provoking term.

Jesus gives them another...

**33** "Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country.

**Like the fig tree, Israel was also called by Isaiah a vineyard.**

**34** Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. **35** And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another.

**They don't want to acknowledge the authority of the owner.**

**36** Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them.

The life of a prophet was rarely a life of respect and reception.

Most recently, John the Baptist was rejected.

Elijah ran for his life

Amos was insulted and turned against.

Micaiah was slapped and put in prison

Zechariah was stoned

Hanani was imprisoned

Uriah was killed

Jeremiah was rejected, his message burned, thrown in a well.

**37** Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' **38** But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' **39** So they took him and cast *him* out of the vineyard and killed *him*.

**What they and we forget is there is an owner.**

**You can do whatever you want with Jesus...**

...but we will have stand before Him and...

...there will be no hiding the fact we have no real fruit.

**40** "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?" **41** They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease *his* vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons."

**42** Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected

Has become the chief cornerstone.

This was the Lord's doing,

And it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

This is a quote from Psalm 118.

A verse from the same song they sang as He just entered Jerusalem.

**43** "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. **44** And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."

**45** Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. **46** But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet.

**This was a powerful way to make His point.**

He has the **authority** to condemn the fruitless fig tree and He will.  
They rejected the Lord and their...  
...**outward leaves can't hide their lack of fruit.**

**Jesus is the cornerstone. He is the key.**