

# Gospel of Mark 11:1-33 – Lesson 11

**Mark chapter 11** reveals the heart of our Savior—moving deliberately with grace, authority, and love, even in the face of rejection. At the same time, this chapter presents a tightly woven prophetic narrative where every detail fulfills Scripture with precision. From the triumphal entry fulfilling **Zechariah 9:9** to the withering of the fig tree, symbolizing Israel's spiritual barrenness. It stands as a sober warning: outward religiosity without true fruit will face judgment.

The cleansing of the temple echoing Malachi's prophecy, every act exposes the decay of religious leadership and highlights the unfolding of God's sovereign plan. Jesus does not come to burden us with more demands, but to lift us into a new way of living: by faith, through grace, rooted in God's unwavering love. He invites us to trust Him completely.

He calls us to live bold, victorious lives—not striving under fear or religious pressure, but resting confidently in His finished work. In Christ, we are empowered to forgive freely, pray boldly, and walk with hearts anchored in the assurance that we are deeply loved and fully provided for in Christ. Jesus is our ultimate authority—and in Him, we lack nothing.

This chapter lays the foundation for Israel's rejection of the Messiah and opens the doorway for the Church Age, where salvation is offered freely to all who believe. Through it all, God's hand moves flawlessly, fulfilling His Word despite man's rebellion.

## **Mark 11:1-3:**

*"Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples; And He said to them, 'Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it.' And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here. "*

This moment marks the beginning of Jesus' final week on earth, often called the Passion Week. Every step He takes is precisely orchestrated to fulfill prophecy. Some scholars say that Bethany means "house of affliction," while others suggest it means "house of figs." Either way, even as Jesus moves toward the cross, He does so with a heart full of grace, stepping into human brokenness to bring healing and hope.

The colt is significant—an unbroken animal, representing Jesus' authority over nature itself. This directly fulfills the Messianic prophecy found in **Zechariah 9:9**: *"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey."*

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Rather than arriving on a war horse as a conquering king, Jesus, the King of Grace, rides humbly on a colt, signaling that He comes in peace, not in judgment.

When Jesus tells His disciples, *"The Lord has need of it,"* it displays His complete sovereignty even over the simple arrangements of daily life. This moment reveals the hidden fingerprints of divine orchestration at work. It is a beautiful reminder that God uses whatever we willingly place in His hands—no matter how small or simple—for His glorious purposes when we surrender it to Him.

### Verses 4–8:

*"So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. But some of those who stood there said to them, 'What are you doing, loosing the colt?' And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road."*

Another small yet precise fulfillment unfolds—nothing happens by accident in these final moments. Every action Jesus takes, and every instruction He gives, is accurate down to the smallest detail.

On this very day—what we now call the Triumphal Entry—Jesus presented Himself publicly as the rightful King of Israel, riding into Jerusalem on a colt just as prophecy had declared. His arrival was not random; it fulfilled to the exact day the timetable given to Daniel centuries earlier (see Daniel 9:25-27). Jesus was announcing Himself as the long-awaited Messiah, the Anointed One, fully aware that this would set into motion the final events leading to the cross.

The spreading of garments and branches fulfills a well-known Jewish custom used to welcome royalty, as seen in **Second Kings 9:13**. By laying their garments and palm branches on the road, the people were offering a public acknowledgment of Jesus as King, fulfilling yet another prophetic image.

Significantly, Jesus receives worship not from the high religious leaders, but from everyday people—the humble, the simple, and the sincere. Grace flows freely to those who are open-hearted, not to those puffed up with pride. Jesus' kingship is embraced by those ready to receive His peace and salvation with childlike faith.

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## Verses 9–10:

*"Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: 'Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"*

"Hosanna" means "Save now!"—a direct fulfillment of Psalm 118. The crowds were declaring Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah, shouting praises as He entered Jerusalem. Yet even as they cried out, most of them misunderstood His true mission. They expected political deliverance from Roman rule, but Jesus came to bring something far greater—eternal redemption for all mankind.

Even when people's understanding is partial or incomplete, God still moves powerfully. Jesus came not to set up an earthly throne at that time, but to secure eternal salvation through the cross, offering a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

## Verse 11:

*"And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve."*

Jesus entered Jerusalem and inspected the temple, but then quietly left, signaling that judgment was near but not immediate. His inspection was deliberate. Rather than acting in haste, Jesus observed the spiritual condition of the temple, recognizing the corruption that had taken root. Judgment would not fall in an impulsive outburst but would come with divine patience, fulfilling God's perfect timing and righteousness.

## Verses 12-14:

*"Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. 'And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, 'Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.' And His disciples heard it."*

Jesus' hunger reminds us that He fully identifies with our human needs and weaknesses. Yet even in His hunger, Jesus is about to teach a profound truth and give a powerful prophetic sign about true spiritual fruitfulness under grace. God is not impressed by mere outward appearances. Under grace, it's never about putting on a show for others—it's about real, lasting fruit that comes through a living relationship with Jesus Christ.

This is the only destructive miracle recorded in the Gospels—a deliberate prophetic act symbolizing the coming judgment on unfruitful Israel. Jesus' action reflects the warning He also gave in **Luke 13:6–9** through the parable of the barren fig tree.

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The fig tree represents human self-effort—man's attempt to cover his own shame, just as Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves together after the Fall (**Genesis 3:7**). By cursing the fig tree, Jesus prophetically declares that self-righteousness and external religion are barren and powerless. Under grace, He calls His followers to rely fully on God's righteousness and provision, not on their own works.

### Verses 15-19:

*"So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. "And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. Then He taught, saying to them, Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a den of thieves. And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching. "When evening had come, He went out of the city."*

The cleansing of the temple is a direct and prophetic act by Jesus. As prophesied in **Malachi 3:1–3**. Jesus is making it unmistakably clear: God's house is meant to be a place of worship, prayer, and intimacy—not a center for commerce or exploitation.

Under grace, Jesus still removes anything that corrupts or hinders our intimacy with God. His actions in cleansing the temple were not fueled by uncontrolled anger but by deep love and holy zeal for the purity of our relationship with the Father. Jesus' desire is that nothing stand in the way of true communion with Him—a relationship where worship flows freely from hearts that have been touched and transformed by His grace.

This act is also deeply symbolic. It exposes how religious systems can commercialize or cheapen genuine faith, turning what should be sacred into something transactional. God does not seek a business exchange of works for blessings. Instead, He desires our hearts. Grace reminds us that a relationship with God is not about earning His favor; it is about freely receiving His boundless love and responding with authentic worship, grounded in gratitude and trust.

Jesus quotes from:

**Isaiah 56:7** — *"...My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."*

**Jeremiah 7:11** — *"Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it," says the Lord.*

The temple, meant to be a place of prayer, intimacy, and blessing for all nations, had been corrupted into a place of exploitation and self-interest. Jesus' confrontation was not

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random; it was intentional and prophetic, exposing the hollow religious system that had strayed far from God's heart.

Under the New Covenant, God's house—our very lives—are meant to overflow with prayer, intimacy with the Father, and blessing for others. Grace always threatens legalistic systems because it liberates people from fear, manipulation, and control, calling them into the freedom of God's love.

This bold confrontation accelerates the religious leaders' plot to kill Him.

Yet even in the midst of rising opposition, Jesus withdraws intentionally. Every step He takes is perfectly timed according to the Father's plan, steadily moving toward the cross. Grace teaches us to live the same way—walking in peace and purpose, trusting God's timing, and not reacting in fear, even when circumstances grow dark around us.

### **Verses 20-24:**

*"Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.' So Jesus answered and said to them, 'Have faith in God.' For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them."*

The fig tree, now seen withered from the roots, symbolizes Israel's spiritual barrenness and impending judgment. It is significant that the tree dried up from the roots first, not the leaves. Judgment begins at the hidden, unseen level—just as decay within a person, a nation, or a spiritual system starts internally before it ever becomes visible outwardly.

In the same way, when we live by self-effort rather than depending on grace, it eventually dries up the life within. Outward appearances may look fine for a season, but without the life of Christ at the root, true fruitfulness withers away. Real, lasting fruitfulness does not come from striving or performance; it springs from staying rooted deeply in Christ's love, abiding in His grace, and trusting in His finished work.

God's Word is powerful and effective even when you do not see immediate results. Peter marvels at the visible outcome, yet the withering was not instant to the eye—it began at the moment Jesus spoke. From the roots upward, the change was real even though it was initially unseen. When Jesus speaks, it is settled. His Word accomplishes what it declares, whether or not we perceive it right away.

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**Isaiah 55:11** reminds us: *"So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."*

Spiritual realities often begin invisibly before they manifest outwardly. In the same way, we are called to trust God's promises even when we don't yet see them—knowing that His Word is always at work beneath the surface, bringing life, change, and fulfillment.

Faith is not about striving harder to believe; it is about resting confidently in the goodness of God.

The emphasis is not on the intensity of our faith, but on the **object** of our faith—God Himself! Faith is only as strong as the One it is placed in. It is not about how big your faith is; it is about how big your God is! Your authority does not come from your own strength—it is firmly rooted in Christ's finished work at the cross. When you believe and speak according to God's promises, mountains move because Jesus has already conquered every barrier.

Prayer under grace is not about begging God to act; it is about thanking Him for what He has already accomplished through Jesus. When you pray, see yourself already possessing the promises. True prayer involves aligning your heart with God's will and believing even before seeing results. It is a beautiful partnership—trusting His power, His faithfulness, and His perfect timing.

### **Verses 25-26:**

*"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."*

Faith and forgiveness are deeply connected in the life of a believer. Harboring bitterness short-circuits the flow of effective prayer and diminishes spiritual power. Forgiveness is not an optional extra; it is vital to living a victorious and grace-filled life. Forgiveness flows freely when you realize how much you yourself have been forgiven. Grace empowers you to release offenses, not through human effort, but because you are already fully forgiven, fully loved, and completely accepted by God.

Under the New Covenant, we forgive because Christ has already forgiven us. As **Ephesians 4:32** says: "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."

This teaching echoes Jesus' earlier instruction during the Sermon on the Mount, recorded in **Matthew 6:14–15**: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also

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forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Relational integrity matters deeply in the Kingdom of God. Grace not only saves us—it also transforms our relationships, empowering us to live in forgiveness, freedom, and love.

### Verses 27-30:

*"Then they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to Him. And they said to Him, 'By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?' But Jesus answered and said to them, 'I also will ask you one question; then answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men? Answer Me.'"*

Religion always demands to know “by what authority” grace operates, because grace refuses to play by the rules of human effort and self-righteousness. This moment represents the full weight of the religious leadership confronting Jesus—a formal challenge from the Sanhedrin officials, intended to discredit Him in front of the people.

Jesus did not need man’s approval; His authority flowed directly from His identity as the beloved Son of God, sent from the Father’s heart of love and purpose. Their question, however, was not asked in sincerity but was a legalistic trap.

If Jesus openly claimed divine authority, they would accuse Him of blasphemy under Jewish law. If He refused to answer, they hoped to discredit Him before the crowds and weaken His influence. But grace cannot be trapped by human schemes—Jesus' authority remained unshakable because it was rooted in heaven, not in the approval of men.

Jesus responds to their challenge with a question that forces them into a dilemma. If the religious leaders affirmed that John’s ministry was from heaven, they would have to acknowledge Jesus, whom John had publicly endorsed. But if they denied John’s authority, they risked losing credibility with the people, who believed John was a true prophet.

Jesus' wisdom shines brightly here. Grace doesn’t need to argue aggressively or fight for position. Instead, grace speaks truth with quiet authority and exposes deception without ever losing its peace. Jesus turns the trap back on His accusers, revealing the hardness of their hearts without compromising His divine mission.

### Verses 31–33:

*"And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'If we say, "From heaven," He will say, "Why then did you not believe him?"' But if we say, "From men"—they feared the people, for all*

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*counted John to have been a prophet indeed. So they answered and said to Jesus, 'We do not know.' And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.'"*

Fear of man always leads to compromise, but grace frees you to live boldly before an audience of One—valuing God's approval above all others. Their internal debate reveals their true hearts. They were more concerned with maintaining public approval than seeking divine truth. Their behavior displays classic political maneuvering, not sincere pursuit of God. Because they refused to answer honestly, Jesus withholds further revelation.

Revelation is reserved for hearts willing to receive truth, not for those seeking to manipulate it. When people harden their hearts, even the clearest truth becomes hidden. Grace is freely offered, but it is never forced upon the unwilling. Jesus honors their choice by withdrawing further explanation, showing that divine truth respects human freedom.

Through all the opposition and rejection, Jesus moves forward with full authority and divine purpose, setting the stage for His greatest victory—His sacrifice and triumph at the cross, where grace would be poured out for all who believe.