



April 21, 2024

## All Leaves & No Fruit - Mark 11 Woody Morwood & Lisa Toney

This Discussion Guide is designed to help you **think more deeply** about the sermon and **engage with others** through thoughtful conversation, biblical exploration and **allow God to work** in your life as you apply what you discover.

### ➤ CONVERSATION STARTER

**What is your favorite fruit?**

### ➤ EXPLORATION

Last week Pastor Aaron walked us through Mark 10 and highlighted some of the ways that help us grow as followers of Jesus. We talked about how faithfulness, dependence, sacrifice, and service are important in our spiritual development.

This week we will hear about the people who did not capture these essentials to discipleship. Over three days, Jesus and his disciples make their way from Bethany to Jerusalem and back again. Bethany is located 2 miles outside of Jerusalem, just east of the Mount of Olives.

#### Day 1

**Mark 11:1-9 (From your bible, read aloud)**

It is important to note that Jesus rode into town on a donkey. At that time in the ancient world, kings and warriors would often ride into a city on a stallion or a war horse which symbolized power and strength. A donkey symbolized peace and humility.

The people wanted a savior to come in power, but Jesus came in peace. At the end of day 1 Jesus entered Jerusalem, but since it was already late, he turned around and went back to Bethany.

**How do you think the disciples reacted when Jesus chose to ride on a donkey?**

#### Day 2

**Mark 11:12-14 (From your bible, read aloud)**

Stepping over the palm fronds left by the people who waved them just the day before, Jesus made the trek back into the Holy City of Jerusalem. Here on day 2 the story of the fig tree is interrupted. Let's see what this interruption was all about...

**Mark 11:15-16 (From your bible, read aloud)**

You may be asking yourself what in the world is going on with Jesus? Was he having a really bad day? Was this grumpy Jesus? Why would the one we know to be full of compassion, healing, mercy, and love get so riled up? Cursing trees and flipping tables seems very strange.

Jesus entered the temple which was the very center of Hebrew life and worship. It was filled with busy people, animals, and noise. The temple was built for people to encounter the Living God, but when Jesus looked around, he saw that it was more like a business center than a place of worship and it broke his heart.

Like a parent who out an abundance of emotional care yells passionately for a child about to burn themselves to stop before he touches the stove, Jesus overturns the tables, warning them that they are missing the point.

## Why do you think Jesus had such a strong reaction in this encounter?

### **1 Corinthians 3:16 (From your bible, read aloud)**

Everything was about to change. God's people would become the new temple. When Jesus walked into those temple courts and flipped those table he was teaching with every word and every action.

### **Mark 11:17 (From your bible, read aloud)**

Jesus is warning them, just like the prophets did in the Old Testament, that even though the temple was full of "religious" activity, it was not focused on God. The people had been distracted from what was important and Jesus makes a radical move to get their attention. Apparently, he did just that.

### **Mark 11:18-19 (From your bible, read aloud)**

Some people like to point to this passage and focus solely on Jesus' action and anger. They want permission to do the same. However, he is urging them to check their hearts and discover where their true motivation lies, in religious activity, or in relationship with God.

## What is the difference between religious activity and building a relationship with God?

### **Day 3**

### **Mark 11:20-21 (From your bible, read aloud)**

The first time Jesus saw the fig tree it appeared to be alive and vibrant from a distance, but up close it was all leaves and no fruit.

When Jesus entered the temple, it also appeared to be alive and vibrant but at a closer look it was just busy, but not prayerful.

It would be wise for us to pay attention to the fig tree and the temple. Both stories have something to teach us. It is not enough to just look like we are living the vibrant Christian life. Our lives are meant to demonstrate the kind of fruit that we read about in Galatians 5:22-23, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. When this is not our reality, we need to pay attention.

## As you look at this list of the Fruit of the Spirit, where do you need to grow?

Jesus goes on to teach the disciples what a life filled with faith really looks like.

### **Mark 11:22-25 (From your bible, read aloud)**

When Jesus refers to "this mountain" we have to wonder what mountain he means. Is Jerusalem the mountain? Are we the mountain? We are not sure, but what is clear in the passage is that a life of faith is essential to bearing good fruit.

**The fig tree was all leaves and no fruit.**

**The temple was all activity and no worship.**

There is nothing wrong with healthy leaves on a tree, but if a fruit tree does not produce fruit, it is not fulfilling its purpose.

The same could be said for the temple. When it was filled with people doing good things for the wrong reasons, it was not fulling its purpose.

Jesus was warning the disciples and all who would listen that it is not enough to just go through the motions and look like we are committed to Christ. Our lives must also bear good fruit which only comes from a relationship with Jesus.

## In what ways are you intentionally building your relationship with Jesus?

### **► TAKE AWAY**

The series of events we read in Mark 11 paint a powerful picture. As Jesus moves back and forth from Bethany to Jerusalem, he uses every opportunity to teach the disciples that God knows the motivation of the heart and that motivation really matters.

As you pray this week, ask God to give you the courage to pray the following prayers:

**Jesus, I ask you to flip the tables in my life that need to be flipped. I want everything I do to honor you.**

**Jesus, I ask you to point out the "fruitlessness" in my life. I want my life to bear good fruit that only comes from a true relationship with you.**