

## Sunday, August 10, 2025: Fruit, Matthew 21:18–22

### **Matthew 21**

**18**Early in the morning, as Jesus was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. **19**Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, "May you never bear fruit again!" Immediately the tree withered. **20**When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. "How did the fig tree wither so quickly?" they asked. **21**Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. **22**If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

### **Introduction:**

This is the last week of Jesus' earthly ministry. We have seen the Triumphal Entry, Jesus cleanse the Temple, and the children shouting Hosana to Jesus. All this is assumed to happen on the same day.

It is also assumed that Jesus is staying with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in Bethany.

Jesus is coming not as King, but as the Sacrificial Lamb; He is coming to Jerusalem to die. He is King, but He is not coming to be crowned as king this week, this week He is coming to set all things right. He will be crucified on Friday. He has angered the Leaders of the Nation; the Pharisees and Teachers of The Law and we will see an escalation of this anger to the point that the Leaders will decide that He must die.

### **1. The Miracle:**

**Matthew 21:19**Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, "May you never bear fruit again!" Immediately the tree withered.

**Mark 11:13**Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. **14**Then he said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard him say it.

And then:

**Mark 11:20**In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. **21**Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! **The fig tree you cursed** has withered!"

Jesus killed this tree – instantly.

This is miraculous! Why? Because it takes a long time for a tree to die completely.

### **2. The Parable:**

At the same time, it is PARABLE. Jesus, with this miracle is giving us a physical example, not just a verbal illustration, of a SPIRITUAL CONCEPT.

**Mark 11:13** Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves,

From a distance, the Fig Tree gave the impression of a healthy, vibrant, living tree; the 'Leaders' of Israel gave the impression of a healthy, genuine, living FAITH. There was no fruit found on the tree, or in the temple leader's lives.

In our life: There is activity and work (leaves), but leaves do not produce life. Leaves do not have seeds that recreate life. Leaves do not have the nutrients that add to life.

Leaves cover. For Christians, this might be things we do to COVER our sin: put your church face on, say the right things, go to the right places.

That might be us if we are not careful. Leaves require nutrients to grow. Works take energy, and when energy is spent doing GOOD THINGS, you can fool yourself. For that generation, and today, RULES were important. They had The Law of Moses and all those rules created around the rules so that you could not get close to the actual rules to break them.

Christianity is not about WORKS or RULES. It is about FAITH. No amount of WORK or keeping the RULES can save you. There is no one righteous, no not one. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. All our righteous acts (our WORKS or RULE-KEEPING) are like filthy rags when compared to God's Righteousness which God FREELY GIVES to those who CALL ON HIM! We are saved by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **3. A process:**

**Luke 13:6** Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. **7** So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' **8** " 'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. **9** If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.' "

We saw this fig tree in Luke earlier in Jesus' ministry. It has been a year, and nothing has happened. It is time for Jesus to come cut down the tree.

What begins as a PARABLE, continues with the beginning of the PROCESS. You accept Christ, but now where is the fruit. Remember the temple cleansing? They said this was the House of God, was it?

**Matthew 21:12** Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. **13** "It is written," he said to them, "'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it 'a den of robbers.' "

What was happening on the outside of the Temple was just a manifestation of what was going on INSIDE the hearts of the people.

**Matthew 15 :8** " 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. **9**They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.' " **10**Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen and understand. **11**What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them."

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Jesus miraculously destroys a tree. It is an illustration of a physical example of a spiritual truth.

**James 2:14**What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? **15**Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. **16**If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? **17**In the same way, ***faith by itself if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.***

There must be FRUIT. There must be evidence. But that does not come overnight, it comes over time. It comes with consistency. Being a Disciple of Christ is 'WALKING WITH HIM.'

#### **4. Living out your faith**

You PLAY a Role in other people coming to know Christ.

**Ephesians 2:10**For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

When God chose to place you in your church, He already had a job for you to do. There are benefits from Serving God for yourself, but the greatest benefit is for you to see others have a transformed life when they accept salvation.

Fruit comes from doing what God has prepared in advance for you to do. Works do not save you. You are saved by Grace through faith, but once you have been re-created in Jesus, given a new life (born all over again), you have a job to do. And God already has it planned out. And it will bear not just FRUIT, but GOOD FRUIT!

**Matthew 7:18**A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. **19**Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. **20**Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

What is your role in the church you attend? How are you living out your faith and impacting your church for eternity? Find that need, your calling, your ministry and then invest in that area. Walk out your faith in service, doing works He has already prepared for you.

**Questions:**

1. What does it mean to be a servant leader? What is the difference between people who serve others and people who are self-serving? At times, the word servant has a negative connotation, does it to you? Why or why not? Are you a servant?
2. Before an important meeting, before an important decision, do you think about the importance of inviting God to speak into your life? Are you asking for wisdom and understanding when up against obstacles of life? Give examples of being deliberate in these areas.
3. "Following Jesus and sacrificial serving others are inseparable." Why is it impossible to distinguish between these two things? Or is it possible? Sacrificially serving others comes at a cost to us. Agree or disagree? What does it cost us to Sacrificially serve others? Is it worth it?
4. In what areas are you currently serving in your church community? What is stopping you from serving? What is your attitude like as you serve others? Would you describe yourself as joyful or begrudging? Diligent or lackadaisical? Do you struggle with judging others not serving in ministries you feel passionate about? What is your motive for serving others? Are you hoping that others will notice your deeds and praise God, or are you hoping they will notice your good works and praise you? Are you motivated by guilt in any of the areas you are serving? How would it change how you serve and where you serve if your main goal were to please God with your service?