

The Final Week: When Leaves Aren't Enough Text: Matthew 21:12–19

Main Idea: Jesus confronts empty religion. God is not looking for appearance or activity. He is looking for genuine fruit.

1. Jesus Cares About the Holiness of His House

Jesus does not go to the Roman governor or the marketplace first. He goes to the temple, the center of worship. The outer courts were meant to be a place where anyone could seek God, even non Jews. Instead, the space had become a marketplace filled with buying, selling, and corruption.

Key reminder: A place dedicated to God should remain focused on the worship of God.

Reflection question: Is our worship centered on God, or has something else taken His place?

2. The Blind See Clearly but the “Leaders” Are Blind

Meanwhile the religious leaders are indignant. They ignore corruption in the temple but become angry about healing and praise directed toward Jesus. The irony of the passage is that those expected to see clearly are blind and those thought to be blind recognize Jesus.

Key reminder: It is possible to be near the things of God but still miss what God is doing.

Reflection question: Are we focused on the right things, or are our priorities misplaced?

3. The Fig Tree Looked Alive but Had No Fruit

From a distance the tree appeared healthy. Up close it was not doing what it was created to do. The fig tree becomes a picture of the temple and its leaders. Religious activity was present, but spiritual fruit was absent.

Psalm 1:3: A person who delights in the Lord is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields fruit.

Galatians 5:22–23: The fruit of the Spirit includes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control.

Key reminder: God is not impressed by appearances. He is looking for fruit.

Reflection question: If Jesus examined our lives closely, what fruit would He find?

Final Reflection

Leaves can look impressive from a distance. But Jesus looks for fruit.

Religious activity alone is not enough. A healthy walk with Christ produces real transformation.

Matthew 3:8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

Take time for a personal “fruit check.” If something in your heart needs to change, bring it before the Lord in repentance and ask Him to work.

Devotion 1 - Scripture Matthew 21:13 “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.’”

Reflection: When Jesus entered Jerusalem after the triumphal entry, many people expected Him to confront the Roman government. Instead, His first stop was the temple. He went straight to the center of worship. What He found there was troubling. The outer courts of the temple, the very place where anyone could come and seek God, had become crowded with business, noise, and corruption. What was meant to be a place of prayer had become something entirely different. Jesus’ actions show that God cares deeply about how His people worship. The problem was not simply buying and selling. The deeper issue was that the business of man had pushed aside the worship of God. A space dedicated to seeking the Lord had been filled with distractions and exploitation.

Challenge: Take a moment today to examine what fills the “temple” of your life. Ask yourself honestly whether prayer, worship, and time with God still hold their proper place. If something else has crowded them out, take a step today to realign your focus.

Devotion 2 – Scripture: Matthew 21:15–16 “But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple courts, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David,’ they were indignant.”

Reflection: One of the great ironies of this passage is who recognizes Jesus and who does not. The blind and the lame come to Him and receive healing. Children praise Him openly, crying out that He is the Son of David. Yet the religious leaders respond with anger.

This pattern appears often in the Gospels. People who seemed far from God were often the first to respond to Jesus, while those closest to the religious system struggled to see Him. Knowledge about God does not automatically lead to obedience to God. Being near religious activity does not guarantee that our hearts are aligned with Him.

Challenge: Ask God to keep your heart sensitive to His work. Instead of assuming you already see clearly, pray that God would open your eyes and keep you attentive to what He is doing in your life and in the lives of others.

Devotion 3 – Scripture Matthew 21:19 “Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves.”

Reflection: At first glance, the fig tree looked healthy. It was full of leaves and appeared to be thriving. But when Jesus approached it, He found no fruit. This moment is more than a strange interaction with a tree. It serves as a picture of the spiritual condition Jesus had just confronted in the temple. The temple was full of activity, movement, and noise. From a distance it looked alive. Yet when examined closely, something was missing. The same warning can apply to our lives. It is possible to appear spiritually healthy on the outside while lacking real spiritual fruit. We may attend church, speak the right language, and maintain a good reputation. But the true measure of our faith is the fruit it produces.

Challenge: Take time today to do a simple fruit check. Look honestly at your life and consider whether the fruit of the Spirit is growing in you. If you notice areas where fruit is lacking, bring them before the Lord and ask Him to continue shaping your heart.