

Pastor Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church

Mark 11:20-25 | Lessons From the Wrath of the Lamb

June 13, 2021

WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Mark 11:20-25
- Bibles in back—our gift to you.

REVIEW:

Last week we saw our Gospel writer, Mark, use a specific type of storytelling technique.

He started with a story of Jesus cursing a fig tree that had big beautiful leaves but produced no fruit...

He then moves right into the narrative of Jesus judging the Temple, and then today, we finish with the fig tree again.

It's like a sandwich.

The fig tree is the bread on both sides, and the Temple story is in the middle.

Mark does this for a particular reason—and that is the spiritual significance among these two stories.

KEYPOINTS

1. The cursing of the fig tree reveals a physical picture of a spiritual reality.
2. The fig tree symbolizes the Temple.
3. Time has run out for both fruitless trees and prayerless temples.

We also learned why Jesus took control of the Temple by overturning tables and stopping people from conducting commerce.

Jesus turns the tables for two reasons:

1. That God the Father was being robbed of worship from all nations.
2. The nations were being robbed of their place in the house of prayer.

So Jesus puts an end to the spiritual robbery.

He judges the Temple as guilty. He sentences the Temple to death.

And we see the imagery of that death through a fig tree.

We talked about how this story was not just for the first century Jews but is also for us today at River Bible Church.

And I asked this question...

How do we as River Bible Church not be ~~cut down~~ ^{cursed} by Jesus Himself?

How do we stay a healthy, life-giving, gospel preaching, discipling making church?

Answer
One thing—collectively, as the body of Christ—we stay unified and laser-focused on the one thing Jesus told his church to do—

We fulfill the Great Commission that is laid out for us in Matthew 28.

We discussed how the health of the local church is determined by the health and the commitment of each member.

If you are a member or would like to be a member of RBC—the Word of God says that it is God Himself who brought you here and gave you that desire.

You didn't choose him, God chose him for you
cf. **1 Corinthians 12:18**—God has arranged each one of the parts in the body just as he wanted.

He has planted in your heart to serve the church in a unique way that only you can fulfill.

He has invited you to become part of a healthy - not perfect - group of other Believers who want to worship God and serve Him as He leads.

Let me ask you this.

So how do you know and recognize that a church is healthy?

Well, Jesus looks at His church like a fig tree.

Is it producing fruit?

Is there love among the church members and a passion for sharing the Gospel message in the Verde Valley?

Are people being fed the word of God?

Are new people responding to the Gospel message?

Are people who have been out of fellowship wanting to come back after a few visits?

Is the church baptizing new Believers?

And then is that church making disciples?

That's all from a corporate level.

then
And we looked at our own lives last week.

I shared the story of a pastor friend who was ministering to someone who was getting ready to die in the hospital...

And the man told the pastor that he wasn't afraid to die—but he was embarrassed to die.

Why? Because he let good things get in the way of the best thing.

He didn't share Jesus with those around him, and therefore, couldn't make disciples.

And he was embarrassed because he missed out.

I pray we don't miss out.

I wanted to ask a couple of follow-up questions this morning before moving on with today's scripture passage.

- How much Biblical fruit are you bearing?
- Do what you call fruit; does God call that busy work?
- Is there a relational sweetness to your life as you get older?
- Or is there a sourness to your life?
- In other words, do you act like you've been baptized in pickle juice?
- The older you become, are you becoming more bitter like a piece of rotten fruit, or are you getting better...like a fine wine?

Well, that brings us to today's Scripture passage.

INTRODUCTION:

We're going to learn several vital Lessons From The Wrath of The Lamb.

At first glance, Jesus seems to have ADD in this passage.

It appears that Jesus and Peter are talking about two separate things.

But they are not.

The big picture that I want you to take away from today's sermon is the importance of prayer.

Prayer is the filter for today

Jesus reiterates ^{PRAYERS} this point ^{- From this point forward} time and time again because He will no longer be physically with the disciples much longer.

Remember, this is passion week. In just a few days, Jesus will be crucified.

Now when it comes to prayer for the Disciples—^{up to this point}, they really didn't spend a whole lot of time in prayer—

Because the Lord God Almighty was physically with them.

There was little reason for them ^{the 12} to pray to God the Father, when God the Son is right there with them.

Jesus physically and verbally provided provision, direction, and protection.

But in the next few days, all of that is going to change.

The Twelve Disciples would become like us—in a sense.

X cf. **1 Peter 1:8**—Though you have not seen ^{Jesus} him, you love him; though not seeing him now, you believe in him,

They, too, would have to become totally dependent on Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.

How are they going to do that?

Let's find out!

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 11:20-25 CSB

- + **Mark 11:12**— The next day when they went out from Bethany, he was hungry.
- + **Mark 11:13**— Seeing in the distance a fig tree with leaves, he went to find out if there was anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for it was not the season for figs.
- + **Mark 11:14**— He said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again!" And his disciples heard it.
- + **Mark 11:15**— They came to Jerusalem, and he went into the Temple and began to throw out those buying and selling. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves,
- + **Mark 11:16**— and would not permit anyone to carry goods through the Temple.
- + **Mark 11:17**— He was teaching them: "Is it not written, **My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations?** But you have made it **a den of thieves!**",
- + **Mark 11:18**— The chief priests and the scribes heard it and started looking for a way to kill him. For they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was astonished by his teaching.
- + **Mark 11:19**— Whenever evening came, they would go out of the city.
- + **Mark 11:20**— Early in the morning, as they were passing by, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up.

+ **Mark 11:21**— Then Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered."

+ **Mark 11:22**— Jesus replied to them, "Have faith in God.

+ **Mark 11:23**— Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.

+ **Mark 11:24**— Therefore I tell you, everything you pray and ask for— believe that you have received it and it will be yours.

+ **Mark 11:25**— And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven will also forgive you your wrongdoing."

These are the very words from God for us this morning.

+ **PRAY:**

EXEGESIS:

+ **Mark 11:20**— Early in the morning, as they were passing by, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up.

This is Wednesday morning of Passion Week.

Passion Week is filled with all the events from Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem to his resurrection.

Jesus entered Jerusalem on Monday.

On Tuesday, He cursed the fig tree and judged the Temple.

And that brings us to our text today, starting in verse 20.

This is early Wednesday morning.

Looking Ahead

Thursday will be the Passover meal.

On Friday, the crucifixion.

On Sunday, the resurrection.

Now, that's a high-level summary of Passion Week, because we still have five more chapters in Mark.

But what our Gospel writer is doing is describing Jesus' daily routine for this week.

In the morning, ^{Jesus} He walks from Bethany to Jerusalem to teach in the Temple.

After a full day of teaching, he walks back to Bethany.

Why Bethany?

Bethany is the home of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha.

Bethany is only a two-mile walk from Jerusalem.

LAST Sunday So on Tuesday morning, Jesus curses the tree; Tuesday evening Jesus and the Twelve walk past the same tree, but can't see that it died because it was already dark.

And here we are on Wednesday Morning.

Back to...

Mark 11:20— they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up.

They—all the disciples saw it.

Withered from the roots up—

From last week we know that the fig tree represents the Temple.

The Temple was supposed to be a place to access God for all the nations.

Unfortunately, the Temple turned into a marketplace that was not only plundering its own people financially— but robbing Almighty God of Worship.

It's interesting to see that when Jesus cursed the tree, saying that it will never bear fruit again...that it died.

Jesus didn't curse the tree to die; he cursed it from bearing fruit.

So what's this tell us?


KEYPOINT: #1 *physical*
spiritual
A lack of fruit is a lack of life.

People can no longer go to the Temple to learn about God and worship Him there.

That old system has withered, dried up, and died.

It's not only barren—it's dead.

The new system which Jesus is ushering in— is not a system at all.

The way to God is now found through *A relationship—* the second person of the Trinity Himself—the Son of God, Jesus Christ. 

Mark 11:21— Then Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered."

This shouldn't be a surprise to Peter.

Verse 21 was predicted by Isaiah 500 years before Jesus was born.

cf. **Isaiah 34:4**— All the stars in the sky will dissolve.

The sky will roll up like a scroll,

and its stars will all wither

as leaves wither on the vine,

and foliage on the fig tree.

Part of that prophecy has come true, the other part will be fulfilled at the 2nd coming.

The Lord also speaks through the prophet Amos after God's discipline doesn't work for the nation of Israel.

cf. **Amos 4:9**— I struck you with blight and mildew;

the locust devoured your many gardens and vineyards,

your fig trees and olive trees,

yet you did not return to me.

This is the Lord's declaration.

So make no doubt about it—the fig tree is a physical manifestation of Israel's spiritual condition.

The Lord said he would curse the Temple, and He did.

Back to...

Mark 11:21— Then Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered."

So put yourself in the Disciple's shoes.

Just the morning before, this tree had big beautiful green leaves...and the very next morning, it's not just dead...it's withered.

This tree has no moisture whatsoever.

The moisture has been squeezed out.

The idea here is that ^{death} it started at the roots, spreading up through the entire tree. ^{like a virus}

We talked about how this is a disturbing miracle last Sunday because it's the only miracle where Jesus commands something unto destruction.

Is that why Peter is so surprised here?

The Twelve have seen Jesus perform divine miracles—heal lepers, walk on water and even raise the dead.

And many times, after Jesus did these things, the Twelve didn't say a word.

Or maybe they asked a question among themselves, *Who is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!*" (Mark 4:31).

And they were terrified.

But they're not terrified here.

They are caught off guard.

They seem to be good with Jesus as healer and teacher, but not so good with Jesus as the righteous judge on sin.

Even the Twelve are uncomfortable with the deity and purity of Jesus.

Mark 11:22— Jesus replied to them, "Have faith in God."

What? What's Jesus talking about?

In Matthew's gospel, the Disciples ask a question, "**How did the fig tree wither so quickly?**" (Matthew 21:20)

Why does it seem that Jesus is changing the subject?

What does faith in God have to do with judging the fig tree or sentencing the Temple as guilty?

KEYPOINT #2

Jesus isn't changing the subject, but rather revealing the source of His power.

The Disciples wanted to know how God's divine judgment occurred so quickly.

So Jesus responds by telling them that the power came from God.

Have faith in God— is a command/order to trust in God and not doubt Him (Matt. 21:20).

So let's slow down and define faith.

cf. **Hebrews 11:1**—Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.

To understand a Biblical view of faith means we have to have a proper object of faith—and that's God, not the Temple.

Faith answers the question of who you put your trust in—yourself or God.

KEYPOINT: #3

Faith is believing and trusting in God's ability rather than your human inabilities.

So we are commanded to have faith in God, because God is the object of our faith.

Why does Jesus make this command to the Twelve Disciples and ultimately to us as His Church?

cf. **Hebrews 11:6**— Now without faith it is impossible to please God...

And if your faith is misplaced—it's impossible to know God or experience God for who He truly is.

Mark 11:23— Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.

In the same way, Jesus said something to the fig tree last week, didn't He?

He commanded the fig tree to do something.

So in cursing the fig tree, which is really the Temple, Jesus had no doubt whatsoever that the fig tree would die.

He had complete confidence that what he had said would be done for him.

Why did ^{Jesus} he have such confidence?

Because He knew the One to whom He prayed.

Jesus didn't just know about God the Father.

He didn't just know the facts about God the Father.

Jesus didn't read an autobiography on God the Father.

No, Jesus had a vibrant personal relationship with God the Father.

Jesus didn't curse the Temple on a whim. *either*


As The Son of Man, Jesus knew that the Temple stood in the way of His mission.


And because it was a part of God's plan and will, when Jesus cursed it, it died.

Jesus did nothing APART from God the Father's will.

We could say it this way—when Jesus prayed it, it happened.

Now, as we read verse 23, are we supposed to take this verse literally? *mta/sa*

What's your gut tell you? 

If you believe that verse 23 is to be taken literally, then dear friend, You can make a "mountain out of a molehill." 

No, this verse is not supposed to be taken literally, and many people are disappointed when they do.

Did Jesus ever throw a mountain into the sea?

Did any prophets in the OT?

What's the point of moving a mountain into the sea?

Jesus is using hyperbole. It's a figure of speech.

The Jews used to call their greatest teachers, "removers of mountains."

When they solved the most significant problems of life, they ~~were said to have~~ "uprooted mountains."

Moving a **mountain** was a metaphor for doing what was seemingly impossible.

We see this in the OT as well.

cf. **Isaiah 40:3**—Prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness;
make a straight highway for our God in the desert.

cf. **Isaiah 40:4**—Every valley will be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill will be leveled;
the uneven ground will become smooth
and the rough places, a plain.

cf. **Isaiah 40:5**—And the glory of the Lord will appear,
and all humanity together will see it,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Once again, Isaiah is talking about Jesus.

And none of that physically happened. *when Jesus walks the Earth.*

Back to...

Mark 11:23— ... and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.

Believes what he says—could be translated, "believes what he prays." — *context*

Prayer enables us to tap into the same power source that was behind Jesus.

Jesus is demonstrating how the new promise replaces the old promise.

Faith is more than just trusting in God in isolated cases.

Faith is being utterly dependent on God for your next breath.

Jesus says, don't doubt.

This is where prosperity preachers get it wrong.

We have to deal with the "name and claim it theology" once again.

The prosperity preachers take this verse out of the context of God being the object of faith and put it in the context of self.

One of the many issues with prosperity theology is that they teach that you have power in and among yourself.

And dear friend, if that is true, then why can't they take a mountain and throw it into the sea themselves?

If they have this power, why don't they go down to the local hospital and heal people themselves?

Instead of telling you that you don't have enough faith to get yourself healed.

KEYPOINT: #4
There is no power apart from God.

God is the giver of power.

He is the one who chooses to dispense it—for your good and His glory.

Now stay with me...

KEYPOINT: #5
Doubt refers not to your own faith—but doubting God.

self-doubt

1.23

So Jesus is saying, "be very cautious here—because when you doubt your doubting God's love, mercy, grace and His very nature."

This is about God - not you.

We have no power in and among ourselves; we must access God's power through prayer.

Faith gives you access to God's power, *Through prayer*

That's Jesus' point.

We are not "little god's" that have intrinsic power of our own—as the prosperity preachers teach.

We are to be utterly dependent on God.

Jesus is the vine, we are the branch. (John 15:5)

Local news

to access God's power through prayer - MARK 4:31

The faith that is required of you is that of a mustard seed.

All you need is just a little faith.

You don't need great faith; that's a lie.

How do we know? Look at the Disciples!

They represent us as the church!

How far from perfect are they?!



These guys are my heroes, but sometimes they fall into the "Knucklehead" category

My favorite example of faith is with the father of the demon-possessed boy right after the Transfiguration.

The father says,
 cf. **Mark 9:22**—If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."

cf. **Mark 9:23**— Jesus said to him, "If you can? Everything is possible for the one who believes."

cf. **Mark 9:24**— Immediately the father of the boy cried out, "I do believe; help my unbelief!"

The moral of that story

The father's weak, imperfect faith was enough!

KEYPOINT: #6

No one's faith is not intertwined with doubt.

Your faith will always be mixed w/ some level of doubt

There is no such thing as perfect faith.

Jas 1:5 - Ask in faith w/out doubting

But your faith can increase slowly over time.

↳ Divide loyalties

Mark 11:24— Therefore I tell you, everything you pray and ask for—believe that you have received, it and it will be yours.

Oh boy, verse 24 is a prosperity preacher's dream verse.

This is a gold mine—literally for a prosperity preacher.

He will preach on this verse, pass the plate, and keep on taking it out of context for just a little seed money.

Question: Why doesn't this verse work in our own lives?

Therefore I tell you, everything you pray and ask for—believe that you have received, it and it will be yours.

Sounds like an open checkbook - why doesn't it work?

I've seen a lot of people command sickness to be gone—here in the Verde Valley.

demn't command to leave

↳ take authority

personally

already have it

And I've yet to see it work.

It doesn't work, because we don't tell God what to do.

Father, forgive us, for telling You what to do!

to understand this verse, we have to understand God's word.

Dear friends, Scripture interprets Scripture.

To understand this verse, we must also know what else God has said in His Word —about faith, belief, and prayer.

If you hang your hat on this verse - And your prayer is not answered - you're going to be really disappointed. → ultimately angry w/ God.

Let me start by asking you a question...

look at v. 24

Jesus says; *therefore I tell you...*

Your translation may say, "Truly, I tell you."

Who's the "you?"

Back in verse 22, Jesus replies to who? THEM!

Jesus is talking to *all* Twelve Disciples.

To interpret Scripture correctly, we must keep it in the original context.

This is not a singular command to *one* person.

Jesus is addressing the Twelve Disciples—ultimately, that means the *church!*

Verse 24 could be translated, "Therefore, I tell you *all*."

Verses 23 and 24 are concerned with group/community prayer.

*power of the church family
coming together in unity, seeking
The Lord's face.*

Jesus is not referring to a personal laundry list of wishes so He can make ^{your} our lives easier.

Mark 11:24— Therefore I tell you, ^{all} everything you pray and ask for— believe that you have received it and it will be yours.

everything you pray and ask for—

Collect Contact

So, in other words, when you come together as a church, and you pray according to God's will, and you don't doubt God's sovereignty in your heart...

Oh boy! There are no limits to the church's prayers. Why?

Because your prayers are in harmony with the purposes of God.

And what is God's purpose?

cf. John 3:16— For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

cf. John 3:17— For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Jesus

And what's the church's purpose?

cf. Matthew 28:19— Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, work, walk for, grocery store

cf. Matthew 28:20— teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Jesus is saying when you combine God's purpose with the church's purpose—

one in the same

You better watch out, because those prayers are as good as answered.



Mark 11:25— And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven will also forgive you your wrongdoing."

It was common for people to pray standing with their heads down and their hands out in the first century.

Verse 25 is all about forgiveness.

Forgiveness is the second condition concerning answered prayer.

The first condition was faith in God. *secondly forgiveness,*

There is a lot to say about forgiveness.

Volumes of books have been written on forgiveness.

Jesus is not referring to eternal forgiveness—salvific forgiveness.

Divine forgiveness for your sin debt only comes through the blood shed on Jesus' cross.

Jesus is referring to relational forgiveness in verse 25.

He's talking about the unforgiveness of certain people in your life.

Now keep in mind, this is a significant lesson from the wrath of The Lamb today, so this is vital.

And it's vital because

The cross of Jesus Christ, his substitutionary atonement, and the propitiation—the paying of your sin debt—all hinges on God's forgiveness for you.

If you find it hard to forgive someone, dear friend, I'm going to point you back to the cross.

There is not a day in your life where you can't ask for forgiveness from God.

Forgiveness is so important to God; it's embedded in the Lord's prayer.

Give us this day our daily bread,and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. (Matthew 6:11-12)

This is nothing new.

God's very nature is forgiveness—we also see this in the OT.

Shortly after Moses got mad at the Israelites and smashed the Ten Commandments, God says this...

cf. **Exodus 34:6**—The Lord—the Lord is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth,

cf. **Exodus 34:7**—maintaining faithful love to a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, rebellion, and sin.

When someone sins against you, but then he apologizes, confesses his sin, and asks for your forgiveness—

Dear friend, this person did exactly what God told him to do—we must forgive.

If you hold a grudge—after someone has come to you confessing his sin and making things right—

If you choose unforgiveness, resentment, and bitterness after that confession, then you can expect God to hold a grudge against you.

cf. **Matthew 6:14**—"For if you forgive others their offenses, your heavenly Father will forgive you as well."

cf. **Matthew 6:15**—"But if you don't forgive others, your Father will not forgive your offenses."

KEYPOINT: #7
Forgiveness is the most costly gift to give and the most overwhelming gift to receive.

Forgiveness is not the same thing as reconciliation.

Reconciliation is the restoration of the relationship.

Many times forgiveness and reconciliation make a relationship stronger.

Many times, however, there must be a severing in that relationship—

Especially when it comes to sexual abuse, spiritual abuse, physical abuse, etc.

Don't overthink forgiveness.

^{many} Sometimes it's a process, to where you find yourself forgiving someone over and over.

And the reason for that is because the hurt is so deep and tragic.

That's okay; the process is good. *-You're not doing anything wrong*

Now, what if someone sins against you, and doesn't come and ask for forgiveness?

Are you still called to forgive?

What's the Word of God tell us?

cf. **Romans 5:6**—For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. x2

In other words, Christ offered forgiveness before you were even born.

Jesus offered you forgiveness—when you were helpless—when you were running from Him.

Offering someone forgiveness to someone who doesn't think they need forgiveness, is more for you than them.

KEYPOINT:

Forgiveness releases them of the sin, and ~~it~~ also frees you of the pain.

You get to choose every day if you want to carry that kind of spiritual baggage — *unforgiveness* around with you.

Spiritual baggage has physical consequences as well.

Headaches, ulcers, bitterness towards others.

It causes you not to trust God and his people.

It's been said that unforgiveness is like swallowing poison and expecting the other person to die.

Lastly, don't believe the world's lie that "Time heals all wounds."

Time heals nothing.

Time doesn't reduce the hurt; all it does is sharpen the pain.

When you remember
So, All that to say this - if you want your prayers answered - stay
LORD'S SUPPER: connected to your church family in faith?
forgive those who have hurt you personally.

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