

Pastor Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Mark 11:12-19 | The Wrath of The Lamb

June 6, 2021

WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Mark 11:12-19
- Bibles in back—our gift to you.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Music
- Brian & Joy

REVIEW:

We are just a tad out of order this week with our Scripture passage.

Two weeks ago, we finished Mark 10 with the story of Blind Bartimaeus.

We would typically move on to Mark chapter 11, but we already covered verses 1-11 on Palm Sunday.

If you would like to watch that sermon, go to our website, watch the video, or listen to it via podcast.

So this brings us to verses 12-19 today.

INTRODUCTION:

So this morning, we are going to discuss one of the most challenging stories in all the gospels.

Today's actions by Jesus are disturbing—

The title of today's sermon is "The Wrath of the Lamb."

I'm not clever—the title is taken from Revelation 6:16.

Many commentators and scholars would prefer that this story was not in Scripture at all. Why?

Because today's Scripture passage involves the only miracle where Jesus specifically kills something.

You may remember the healing of the demon-possessed man in Gerasene.

The Gerasene Demoniac—Jesus cast out not just one demon from this man, but thousands of demons and sent those demons in a herd of pigs, which then ran off a cliff and drowned.

That was also an act of destruction, but not like today.

*Sons of Thunder
Lk 9:56*

And that's why this narrative is so disturbing and upsetting to many people. *Contradiction?*
The Son of Man didn't come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.
On the surface, it seems that Jesus simply overreacts—because he's hungry.

People have claimed that Jesus cannot be God because of this story—because God would not pour out his fury into an innocent plant, of all things.

Others have said that this incident is an example of a waste of supernatural power.

Still, others say that this story does not seem worthy of Jesus.

So what's going on here. Why all the fuss?

The first question we have to ask ourselves is this...

Is this story really about a fruitless fig tree? *NO!*

Mark gives us another clue.

Well, the way that our Gospel writer, Mark, writes the narrative gives us a clue.

He writes about Jesus cursing a fig tree, and then how Jesus moves to the cleansing of the temple, and then back to the same fig tree.

This is not by accident.

Mark has used this storytelling technique before.

It's like a sandwich.

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

Understanding why he does this gives us great insight into how to interpret this passage.

② There is a significant spiritual connection between these two stories.

① It's like going in for counseling... where the problem is not the problem.

KEYPOINT #1

The cursing of the fig tree reveals a physical picture of a spiritual reality.

It's interesting how we think as humans—how we are so focused on the here and now—the physical over the spiritual.

So to understand the cursing of the fig tree, we must look beyond the surface and view this narrative for what it is—a living parable.

This story is not about Jesus' hunger, and it's not about Jesus' anger.

What exactly is this story about? Let's find out!

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

SCRIPTURE: Mark 11:12-19 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.

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

+ **PRAY:**

EXEGESIS:

Mark 11:12— The next day when they went out from Bethany, he was hungry.

Triumphal entry
the day prior Jesus rides into Jerusalem, goes into the temple, looks around & leaves
~~Throughout our study of Mark, we've seen a pattern of Jesus praying throughout the night.~~

There is a good chance that he did that here.

Matthew's Gospel notes that it's "early in the morning" (Matt. 21:18).

Probably before 6:00 am.

Why would Jesus pray throughout the night?

The day before, Jesus entered Jerusalem in His triumphal entry and goes to the Temple, looks around, and leaves when it was late.

Jesus knows that he is days away from His crucifixion, so it's possible that He spent most of the night in prayer alone.

He is now walking back to the Temple, very early in the morning, and he's 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.

The nation of Israel overflows with fig trees.

Fig trees are also mentioned in Scripture about 200 times.

So the first thing we need to do to understand this narrative is to see what else God has to say about fig trees in His Word.

The prophet Jeremiah saying...

cf. **Jeremiah 8:13**— "I will gather them (Israel's leaders) and bring them to an end.", This is the Lord's declaration. "There will be no grapes on the vine, no figs on the fig tree, and even the leaf will wither. Whatever I have given them will be lost to them."

That doesn't sound pleasant.

Let's see what else Jeremiah has to say...

cf. **Jeremiah 29:17**— This is what the Lord of Armies says: "I am about to send sword, famine, and plague against them, and I will make them like rotten figs that are inedible because they are so bad."

The context here is Israel's exiled leaders on their way to Babylon.

They were exiled because of their disobedience.

Unfortunately, the prophet Micah doesn't have better news as he talks about Israel's moral decline in...

cf. **Micah 7:1**— How sad for me!

For I am like one who—
when the summer fruit has been gathered
after the gleaning of the grape harvest—
finds no grape cluster to eat,
no early fig, which I crave.

cf. **Micah 7:2**— Faithful people have vanished from the land;
there is no one upright among the people.

So with that background on fig trees and context with Israel's leaders, back to our text

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.

KEYPOINT #2:

The fig tree symbolizes the Temple.

And the Temple is precisely where Jesus is headed.

The fig tree also physically demonstrates what Jesus has experienced with Temple leadership— Pharisees and scribes.

This fig tree has big beautiful leaves but bears no fruit.

The nation of Israel was just like this unproductive and unfruitful fig tree.

Its leaves only cover the nation's ^{spiritual} shame and nakedness, just as Adam and Eve used fig leaves to cover their _{physical} nakedness. (Gen. 3:7)

V.13 " For it was not the season for figs.

But wait, Mark tells us specifically that early spring is not the season for figs.

And it's this statement that seems so disturbing. It's not found in Matthew's Gospel.

In fact, it's like Mark intentionally increases the problem—he pokes a bear with a stick...

Because Jesus would never do anything that goes against common sense. ! 😊

Fig trees in Jerusalem usually have leaves by March or April.

But they don't produce figs until June.

Some people try to soften this story—and defend Jesus—by claiming that Jesus expected to find “first fruits.”

These first fruits are called green figs or *paggim*.

They're not very tasty because they're tiny flowers covered with soft skin.

Some people believe that these green figs are what Jesus expected to find.

But knowing what we know about what God has said in the OT...

And knowing what we know through all the interactions between Jesus and the Pharisees throughout Mark's Gospel...

And finally, knowing what we know about where Jesus is going and what His mission is, do you think that this narrative is about Jesus' hunger?

We have a second clue in this statement.

For it was not the season for figs.

In Greek, the word 'season' (*kairos*) is not the botanical term that you would expect.

It's the same term found in...

cf. **Mark 1:14**— After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God:

cf. **Mark 1:15**— “The time (season) is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Season— unknown period of time.

It's not referring to the spring or summer.

Mark 11:14— He said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again!"
And his disciples heard it.

Why did Jesus curse this tree?

Is it because Jesus is really hungry, and now he's angry?

No! — surface level issue

Jesus is not only the Son of God and the Son of Man... but He's also a prophet.

The prophets in the OT communicated God's message through object lessons.

In other words, the prophet would take something from everyday life and use that object and reveal God's truth and grace through it.

Jesus does the same thing here.

He took the object of a well-known fig tree and displayed Israel's sin of hypocrisy by its lack of fruit.

Mark 11:14— And his disciples heard it.

Heard — "were hearing." The open-ended tense implies a sequel — next week.

Jesus used fruit as an analogy a lot — over 200 times in the Gospels.

cf. **Matthew 7:15** — "Be on your guard against false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravaging wolves."

cf. **Matthew 7:16** — You'll recognize them by their fruit. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes or figs from thistles?

cf. **Matthew 7:17**— In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit.

cf. **Matthew 7:18**— A good tree can't produce bad fruit; neither can a bad tree produce good fruit.

cf. **Matthew 7:19**— Every tree that doesn't produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

cf. **Matthew 7:20**— So you'll recognize them by their fruit.

So here, we have a transition to the Temple.

Jesus curses the fig tree?
Keep walking.

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,

This Temple was the most significant religious structure in Rome.

Picture thirty-five football fields together—that's how big the Temple was.

The largest part of the Temple was called the Court of the Gentiles.

This court— this section— of the Temple was three football fields long and two and a half football fields wide.

The Court of the Gentiles had columns that were thirty feet high and so massive that it took three persons with hands joined together to surround one of these pillars at the base. (*Ant.* 15.391–425).

This is where the action takes place.

Now let me back up...

In the Gospel of John, we read about the first cleaning of the temple. (John 2:13-16)

Jesus began His public ministry by cleansing the Temple at Passover.

He did this to prove His authority as the owner of His Father's house.

He gave the Temple three years to clean up their act—to repent.

But, here we are— three years later, and nothing changed.

Nobody listened.

People are buying and selling—doing what they've always done.

So it seems that Jesus goes through most of the same motions to cleanse the Temple again.

Pause... We just learned from the living parable of the fig tree that Jesus is not cleaning the Temple anymore—time's up!

He is now judging the Temple. *Sentencing - guilty*

So picture this, Jesus and the Twelve enter the temple area—The Court of the Gentiles where hundreds of thousands of people are—

And all of a sudden, they get blasted with the stench of farm animals.

The Court of the Gentiles had become a stockyard.

On top of that, the noise level is so high; you can barely hear one another.

This angers Jesus once again.

During the first cleansing, the Disciples remembered Psalm 69:9—***Zeal for your house will consume me.***

And here we see this zeal once again. Verse 15 says...

X Began to throw out those buying and selling. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves, =

Have you ever watched someone overturn a table? It's a violent act.

Why would Jesus become violent?

Because ^{Israel's leaders} the high priest authorized all this commerce to take place in the Court of Gentiles—and Jesus was directly challenging his authority.

Verse 15 talks about moneychangers and people buying and selling—so what's this about?

The Moneychangers sat at tables with stacked coins.

Many people who came to the Temple didn't have the correct currency to pay the Temple tax, so they had to exchange their Roman coins for the proper Hebrew coins—at an inflated interest rate—extortion.

People were also buying and selling ^{goods}—Small business owners—booths—sold the oil, wine, salt, along with animals for sacrifices.

It was a one-stop-shop for all of your Passover needs— it's a 7-11 right there in the foyer of the church.

Loaded question: Are the moneychangers and the businessmen the reason why Jesus started flipping over tables for the second time? **No!**

Isaiah predicted...

cf. **Isaiah 1:11**— "What are all your sacrifices to me?" asks the Lord.

"I have had enough of burnt offerings and rams and the fat of well-fed cattle; I have no desire for the blood of bulls, lambs, or male goats.

cf. **Isaiah 1:12**— When you come to appear before me, who requires this from you— this trampling of my courts?

*Religious Circus
- Who told you this was acceptable?*

Throughout the OT, we see time and time again God telling the Israelites how He wants obedience over sacrifice.

cf. **Jeremiah 7:21**— This is what the Lord of Armies, the God of Israel, says: "Add your burnt offerings to your other sacrifices, and eat the meat yourselves."

cf. **Jeremiah 7:22**— for when I brought your ancestors out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak with them or command them concerning burnt offering and sacrifice.

cf. **Jeremiah 7:23**— However, I did give them this command: "Obey me, and then I will be your God, and you will be my people. Follow every way I command you so that it may go well with you."

cf. **Jeremiah 7:24**— Yet they didn't listen or pay attention but followed their own advice and their own stubborn, evil heart. They went backward and not forward.

So, let me ask you this... was Jesus' concern with commerce?

No, His concern is the same concern He's always had...obedience.

Mark 11:16— and would not permit anyone to carry goods through the temple.

In other words, Jesus stopped people from using the Temple for their own benefit.

This the temple is not a shopping mall.
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!**"

Jesus quotes from two OT texts in verse 17:

cf. **Isaiah 56:7**—I will bring them to my holy mountain and let them rejoice in my house of prayer.

Their burnt offerings and sacrifices

will be acceptable on my altar,

for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."

The second is...

cf. **Jeremiah 7:11**—Has this house, which bears my name, become a den of robbers in your view? Yes, I too have seen it.

Robbers usually hid in caves.

But not here in the Temple.

news
 These robbers are out in the open—commissioned by the leadership of Israel to plunder their own people.

Over 250,000 lambs alone were sold for Passover.

So this is big business:

Follow the Money
But it's not the reason Jesus flipped over tables

Pause...do you think Jesus makes this scene for the second time — because of money?

Jesus turns the tables over ~~once~~ again for two reasons:

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

the gentiles were not able to — prevented from worshipping God
Yes, people were being robbed financially, but Jesus is much more concerned about people being robbed spiritually.

This area, The Court of the Gentiles, was a place for the Gentiles to gather and worship the One True Living God.

- ② Because Israel was supposed to be a blessing to all the nations.
- ① God commanded Israel to proclaim God's truth to every nation.

The Court of the Gentiles was designed to a place of praise and prayer.

There was no other place for a Gentile convert to go to worship God except for this area.

But, praise and prayer were replaced by the noise and stench of farm animals.

And don't forget about the clamor and the racket from the money changers and small business owners shouting over the noise of the animals.

Talk about a religious circus!

This is like a bad reality tv show combining county fair with the NY Stock Exchange.

There's no way anyone can pray in that environment,

At the end of the day, Jesus saw what the religious leaders did not—the desecration/violation of holy ground.

The Temple sat on the same ground— Mount Moriah, where God swore an oath to Abraham dealing with obedience.

This is also the same ground where the prophet Isaiah was standing in the original Temple and sees a vision of the pre-incarnate Jesus sitting on His throne with angels singing, "Holy, Holy, Holy."

In that vision, Isaiah saw Jesus' robe—and how it was like carpet on the Temple floor...

And yet, this was the same place where the Pharisees and Scribes permit dirty, filthy, stinky farm animals to roam to be slaughtered... all in the name of religion.

So Jesus puts an end to it.

KEYPOINT #3:

Time has run out for both fruitless trees and prayerless temples.

The Jews had their theology and priorities wrong.

The Jews thought that their Messiah would cleanse the temple of Gentiles.

But notice what Jesus does.

He judges the Jewish temple for the Gentiles.

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.

The sense here is that chief priests are trying to control Jesus.

They are afraid of Jesus—afraid of his teaching, miracles, his popularity.

Just as Jesus replaced the twelve tribes with the Twelve Apostles, Jesus is now replacing the physical Temple with Himself.

We know this to be true because the Temple is destroyed by the Romans 40 years later.

Mark 11:19— *Whenever evening came, they would go out of the city.*

Literally “whenever it became late.”

In other words, Jesus was busy teaching in the Temple until sunset.

PREACH:

Dear friends, make no doubt about it—

This living parable was a warning for the Temple in the first century...

And is a warning for us as the church today.

Jesus warns us about spiritual unproductiveness. / *BAD Fruit*


Jesus reveals what happens when His Church is unfaithful and unfruitful for the Kingdom of God.

that church will be cut off

He also has a lot to say about bad fruit.

Let me show you another parable.

+ cf. **Luke 13:6**— And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree that was planted in his vineyard. He came looking for fruit on it and found none.

Does that sound familiar? 

Jesus is the man, and the fig tree is His church.

+ cf. **Luke 13:7**— ^{Jesus} He told the vineyard worker, (the church's pastor), 'Listen, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it even waste the soil?'

+ cf. **Luke 13:8**—"But he (the pastor) replied to him (Jesus), 'Sir, leave it this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. — *New Sermon Series*
— *more programs*

+ cf. **Luke 13:9**— Perhaps it will produce fruit next year, but if not, you can cut it down.' "

Question

How do we as River Bible Church not be cut down by Jesus Himself?

Have you noticed that we have had multiple churches close their doors in the Verde Valley over the past year? — *Scary, tragic*

Even more churches that can't keep a pastor.

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

How do we stay on mission & grow? Because a healthy tree grows,

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

+ cf. **Matthew 28:18**— "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.

+ 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,

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." — you can't do it by yourself.

Every local church is to produce disciple-making disciples.

That's the priority.

We are to share Jesus and His gospel with those around us.

Corporately

We have chosen the 3 Circles evangelism method to do that.

What's that mean for you individually? Because a church is only as strong as its membership

How do you know that you are producing the type of fruit that Jesus expects from you? Good news, we don't have to guess. — God tells us!

cf. **Galatians 5:22**— But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. driving.

Easier said than done!

How do you fulfill this command? practically if these are the fruits of the Spirit — And God expects? demands fruit — how? we don't have to guess!

cf. **John 15:5**— I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me.

cf. **John 15:6**— If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown aside like a branch, and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned. Turn your back on Jesus

cf. **John 15:8**— My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples. by what?

That's an interesting phrase, isn't it—we have to prove to be Jesus' disciples.

Pastor friend story - "NOT Afraid to die, but I AM embarrassed to lie."

Why? Because he didn't produce Biblical fruit. He refused to share the gospel or make disciples.

PRAYER:

-something to think about.

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