

READ Mark 1:1-3

We are using this opening text of Mark to set up our lesson for this morning as a simple reminder that Mark's Gospel was written to tell the story of the coming Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Mark opens his Gospel claiming such of this writing, and he shows this as being what people should have expected based upon the prophetic writings of Isaiah. In fact, so many of Isaiah's writings are critical to the picture painted for us in Mark's Gospel, and that is something we will see on a number of occasions this morning, along with writings from a number of other prophets.

Yet, before we get to those writings of the prophets, let's consider that we are getting into a new section of Mark's Gospel. We have seen the evidence to support Mark's claim for Jesus as the Messiah. We have seen what it means for Mark's claim to be true. Now, we are going to conclude our studies in this Gospel by showing Jesus fulfilling this role as God's Suffering Servant. I cannot give proper credit to whoever came up with this alliterated final week of Jesus's life that we are about to launch into, but this is not original with myself outside of Sunday's title. Hopefully it will serve as a good guide for us in these concluding studies.

- I. Evidences For Jesus As The Messiah (1:1-8:21)
- II. What It Means For Jesus To Be The Messiah (8:22-10:52)
- III. The Messiah As The Glorified Suffering Servant (11:1-16:20)

Jesus's Final Week

Sunday: Acclaim (11:1-11)

Thursday: Anticipation (14:12-72)

Monday: Authority (11:12-19)

Friday: Atonement (15:1-47)

Tuesday: Argument (11:20-13:37)

Saturday: Absence

Wednesday: Appraisal (14:1-11)

Sunday: Awakening (16)

This morning we are going to look at the great acclaiming by many of Jesus entering into the city of David as Lord, and then we will see Him exercising His authority in proclaiming judgment upon those who have miserably failed in upholding God's desires for them as His special covenant people. As I said, there will be a number of Old Testament texts that will tie in to this text because of the quotations used by the people and Jesus, but it is all leading us back to what Jesus desires as God's Servant. He desires for God's house to be what He designed for it to be...a house of prayer, repentance, forgiveness, and fellowship with God. Let's read this text and then consider how these scenes all mesh together into a powerful closing statement by Jesus.

Mark 11:1-26

A. Jesus enters Jerusalem. (11:1-11)

1. This third section of Mark's Gospel opens with something new that we haven't seen before. Up until this point, any public proclamations concerning Jesus's true identity or status have been prohibited by Jesus Himself (**demons 1:34; healed leper 1:43; healing of Jairus's daughter 5:43; announcing His Messiahship 8:30; the transfiguration 9:9**). Yet, here in this moment, He is going to allow such acknowledgements, in a very public way, to take place.
2. This migrating mass of people has been making its way westward toward Jerusalem, and it has arrived at Bethphage and Bethany which are about two miles outside of the Holy City. Jesus sends two of His disciples into the city to commandeer a colt for His entrance into the city. He is able to tell them exactly where a colt will be tied up, and He tells them what they

needed to say in order for them to take temporary possession of the colt. Things worked out just as Jesus had told them, and in doing so two important things are realized. First, taking possession of this colt would allow for Jesus to enter Jerusalem according to the fulfillment of the prophecy of **Zechariah 9:9**, *“Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout in triumph, Daughter Jerusalem! Look, your King is coming to you; He is righteous and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”* Secondly, how all of this works to shows us that Jesus is in complete control of the situation. Everything He said would happen happened exactly as He said it would. Only He, being the Son of God, could guarantee such.

3. Jesus and His disciples are now making their entrance into Jerusalem at the beginning of the Passover week, and this allows for thousands of devout Jews to be present within the City of David. It was not a rarity for the population of Jerusalem to triple during this specific week (*Weirsbe, Be Diligent, pg 131*). So many thousands of additional people would have been spectators to this incredible scene of Jesus coming into the city on the colt as people threw their clothes onto the street while others spread out branches from the fields. In addition the crowds were shouting, *“Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!”*
4. This was an entrance truly fit for a king. In addition to the writings of **Zechariah 9:9**, the laying down of clothes is symbolic of a royal welcome (**Jehu’s anointed as king II Kings 9:13**), the **Psalms 118:26** is being quoted in association with proclamations of the coming kingdom of father David are all symbolic of the role that would be played by Israel’s Messiah promised by God, and the shouting of *Hosanna* is a term meaning “save now!” All of this put together shows us those who were participating in this scene were very much seeing Jesus as the Messiah and King who was entering into David’s city to bring freedom to God’s people. They desired greatly to be free, and Jesus was coming to bring freedom. However, the freedom He was coming to bring wasn’t exactly what they were expecting.
5. Further, the ending of this section isn’t exactly what we might be expecting for it is quite anticlimatic. We might expect Jesus to march right into the temple and begin His restorative work, but instead He only makes a brief stop at the temple, surveys the scene, and then goes back to Bethany with the Twelve since it was already late. The great introduction of this great Messiah and King would have to wait until Monday when He would return to the temple and make His presence strongly known.

B. Jesus curses the fig tree. (11:12-14)

1. Before we can get back to the temple, Mark first wants us to know of a strange incident that happened on the way from Bethany to Jerusalem. We are told that Jesus is hungry, and He sets off towards a fig tree with leaves that He sees in the distance. He inspects the tree only to find out that it had nothing but leaves on it. In response, He says to the tree, *“May no one ever eat fruit from you again!”* This is a puzzling response from Jesus since He has only ever been destructive one other time as far as we can tell, and that incident was involving the demons who were allowed to enter the herd of pigs which ran straight into the sea and drowned in **5:11-13**. What’s going on here?
2. I believe this display of disappointment followed by punishment is basically a parable being acted out by Jesus to represent an underlying truth. That truth being illustrated by Jesus is that Israel has been fruitless as a covenant people, and they are about to be cursed. The Old Testament is full of instances in which the people of Israel are described as trees, fields, and vineyards (**Jeremiah 8:13; 24; 29:17; Hosea 2:12; 9; Joel 1; Micah 7:1; Malachi 3**). God has had a rocky relationship with Israel because of their cycles of faithfulness and rebellion, and these prophets see Israel as being fruitless trees, crops, and vineyards who are failing to yield

proper spiritual fruit before God. Because of this, they are about to be judged by God and not have the opportunity to ever again produce fruit as God's specially chosen people. This cursing of the fig tree seems to clearly symbolize the cursing of the nation of Israel for their continued fruitlessness before God.

3. However, some have tried to argue that Jesus is simply throwing a tempter tantrum over the lack of fruit because He should have known better than to expect fruit when it was not the season for figs. However, I would respond by saying that Jesus is again making a judgment against Israel through this acted out parable. Yes, this tree might have been out of season, but Jerusalem should have been ready to receive her King whether "in season or out of season." They should have always been bearing fruit for the Lord, but they were not, and Jesus is about to continue His pronouncing of judgment against Israel in the temple.

C. Jesus cleans up the temple. (11:15-19)

1. Jesus and His disciples now enter the temple where Jesus is able to see up close what He had possibly seen in His sneak peak the previous evening. Filling what would have been the court of the Gentiles were money changers and those merchants. The money changers were exchanging money for those who were from out of town. The merchants would have been selling animals (at a premium price) for offerings for those who had travelled in from some distance. Jesus is obviously incensed by what He sees since He goes about throwing out those engaging in business. He overturns tables and chairs, and prohibits anyone from carrying goods into the temple for business.
2. While His actions are sending a strong message, His words cut just as deep. In doing all of this Jesus teaches a strong lesson, ***"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 separate passages (**Isaiah 56:7 & Jeremiah 7:11**) to make His point. Here He is trying to fulfill God's great promises of bringing all people together to Himself to allow all nations to participate in the blessing of prayer which allows for repentance and brings forgiveness and fellowship. However, the very place where God's present covenant people ought to be focusing on bringing the nations to the Lord was being used as a place for financial exploitation. The rates were constantly in flux among the money changers, and those selling doves (which would have normally been cheap) were able to charge a high price to those who were poor who would have only been able to afford such an offering. The Gentile people were not seeing a holy people of God, but instead they were seeing thieves at work.
3. These sins, which had previously caused God's presence to depart from the temple and led Israel to be taken away into captivity (**Isaiah 1:10-17**), were once again about to bring God's wrath and judgement down upon the Jews and their temple system. This is precisely the context in which **Jeremiah 7:11** is found (**Jerusalem will be come like Shiloh Jeremiah 7:1-15**)! God desired pure hearts, hands, offerings, and prayers, but He was not receiving that at this time. As a result, instead of receiving that mercy and forgiveness that such were to bring, wrath and judgement were right around the corner. Warren Wiersbe said it well when he summarized the state of Israel as the people being externally fruitless and the temple being internally corrupt. Yet, the chief priest and scribes were not about to go down without a fight. They wanted to kill Jesus, but they couldn't do so because they were afraid of Him as the people were continually astonished at His teachings. The roots and foundation were laid bare. God is ready to judge! But even with His judgment, we'll soon see, not all hope is lost.

D. Jesus encourages confident prayer. (11:20-26)

1. This block of texts concludes with what seems to take place on Tuesday of this final week when a number of arguments are going to be brought against Jesus as His authority is

challenged. Jesus and His disciples are passing by the previously cursed fig tree which has now become withered from the roots up. Peter remembers what Jesus had previously said, and brings the result to Jesus's attention, "*Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered!*" Just as Jesus's judgment had come to pass on the fig tree, so should the Apostles have realized that Jesus's judgment against the temple and Jewish people would also surely come to pass.

2. Therefore, Jesus is going to use this opportunity to encourage His disciples and any others listening that their faith must be firmly set upon God. What He says next is a text that has been misused and abused in so many ways, but let's try to understand this text in its context here. Jesus says, "*Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the seas,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore, I tell you, everything you pray and ask for — believe that you have received it and it will be yours.*" Those who buy into the *Name It & Claim It* prosperity Gospel camp out in this text all the time, but let's keep the text in its context of Jesus pronouncing judgment upon Jerusalem, the temple, and the Jewish people. What mountain might Jesus be referring to? Could it be that Jesus is referring to Jerusalem and her temple? Could Jesus be referring to the coming judgment of Jerusalem and her temple as they will be standing against His people as they are trying to further establish and grow His kingdom? I think this language can easily be understood in that light. God can be trusted and people can have faith in Him that He is going to judge His enemies (which the Jewish leadership along with many of the Jewish people had become). As they prayed for God's deliverance from their enemies, they were to have great confidence that God would hear and answer them. This is what the temple setting was originally designed to do. It was designed to be the place where they could offer up prayers and sacrifices to God, but now they were about to be able to do that anywhere as Christians. The Christians themselves would emulate Jesus as temples of God where His presence would dwell.
3. However, they had to make sure that the temple was properly cleaned up! They couldn't be a den of thieves, and they also couldn't be holding grudges against other people. They had to be willing to forgive others in order for their Father in heaven to forgive them. Forgiveness was key to the functioning of the temple, and that forgiveness that once had to be found at the temple would soon be available anywhere through prayer, but they had to make sure to be a forgiving people in order to receive that same desired forgiveness from others.

The continued unfaithful character of God's people would not simply be looked over by God. He had enough, and it was time for Jesus to come not only to offer salvation to the world but also to deliver the message of impending judgment for the external failures to produce fruit among the people and the internal failures of corruption that could be found within the temple setting. Yet, in judgment against sin, Jesus was also bringing a new avenue through which God's people, of all nations, themselves could be the house of prayer leading to repentance, forgiveness, & fellowship.

Application Questions

A. Am I willing to let God's temple be what He desires for it to be, today?

1. Jesus brings strong actions and words of judgment against the people and the temple because of their failure to produce fruit and operate as they ought to have been doing. Is it possible that our current way of living is also failing to produce fruit or live up to the standard that God has set for us as His people?

2. Are we content simply wearing the name of Christian or are we truly living that out day to day? Have we allowed ourselves to fall back into the same patterns of wickedness from which we were delivered from once we joined the Body of Christ? May we all take time to examine ourselves to be sure that we are bearing fruit of the Spirit (**Galatians 5:22-25**) within our lives and not hindering our fellowship with God through allowing ourselves to become "*a den of thieves*" by allowing the works of the flesh to take hold within our lives (**Galatians 5:19-21**)
- B. Do I have the confidence in prayer that Jesus desires for me to have?**
1. While we might not go along with the whole *Name it & Claim It* crowd, we would do well to make sure that we are constantly praying to God with confidence as we seek His guidance and provisions in everything that we do. Jesus clearly seems to want us to have confidence as we go to God in prayer! Do we have that confidence?
 2. Maybe we don't have that confidence because our faith isn't as it ought to be. If this is true of us then let's get to work strengthening that faith! Maybe we don't have confidence because we know we're not exactly asking for the best things or with the best of motives. If this is the case then we need to readjust our desires and motives! Or maybe we aren't confident because we know that things are not right with another or other in our lives. If this is where we are then we ought not delay! Let's make those things right so we can all stand before God in constant prayer with great confidence!

Main Point/Conclusion: *We can all be houses of prayer before God by bearing fruit and living pure lives before Him!*

This section of text can stand out in our minds so much because Jesus seems to be acting in a totally different way than we have seen Him act before, but we must recognize that He is still simply doing the will of the Father in issuing warnings to those who should have been bearing fruit that weren't. He is warning those who should have been taking advantage of God's grace and mercy through the temple setting but were not. May we take strong notice of their failures and Jesus's responses as a reminder of our need to always be mindful of the way we are living before Him so that we might benefit from God's grace and mercy and every great blessing that comes from above.