

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Let's pray...

**[Mar 11:20-33 NKJV] 20 Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. 21 And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away." 22 So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. 23 "For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. 24 "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you**

**ask when you pray, believe that you receive [them], and you will have [them]. 25 "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. 26 "But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses." 27**

**Then they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to Him. 28 And they said to Him, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?" 29 But Jesus answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one question; then answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things: 30 "The baptism of John--**

**was it from heaven or from men? Answer Me." 31 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' 32 "But if we say, 'From men' "--they feared the people, for all counted John to have been a prophet indeed. 33 So they answered and said to Jesus, "We do not know." And Jesus answered and said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."**

Last week, our study was on the triumphal entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem.

We saw Jesus fulfill scripture by riding into Jerusalem on a colt.

The multitudes gave Jesus the red carpet treatment as they laid their clothes on the street and shouted “Hosanna” “Hosanna” as He entered Jerusalem.

Then Mark tells us that Jesus walked into the temple – looks around and returns to Bethany.

The next day Jesus – looking for a snack, approaches a fig tree on His path and curses it – because it lacked fruit.

The tree lacked fruit despite giving the indication that it was supposed to have fruit by displaying leaves.

And this fig tree is a representation of the spiritual relationship that Israel had with God during this time.

Despite having the temple and the Mosaic Law – all an indication or a promise of fruit, there was an absence of fruit.

And we saw this as Jesus entered the temple the same day and cleansed it from those that were ripping the people who were coming into the temple.

So now we come to Tuesday, and in verse 20 and 21, Jesus and His disciples walk right by the same fig tree that Jesus cursed the day before and Peter sees that fig tree has dried up from the roots. It has withered away.

**Trees don't die overnight.** Especially one that had leaves the day before. Mark doesn't tell us that the leaves were scorched because of the hot sun – the tree wasn't showing signs of it beginning to die –

The disciples could not see the roots, but from what they could see, it was evident that the fig tree was "dried up from the roots," never to recover.

So as they are looking at the tree, Jesus uses the withered fig tree to teach the disciples and us a lesson.

As the disciples have focused their attention on the fig tree, Jesus says the phrase, "Have faith in God"

Wait a minute. What does having faith in God have to do with this dead tree?

You see, Jesus was letting them know that the nation was headed into a time of judgment, because of their unfruitfulness.

In the meantime, the disciples would be sent into the world to preach the Gospel to all nations. And in order to preach the gospel, they would need power to accomplish the will of God.

You see, by having faith in God, Jesus was not disclosing to His disciples why He withered the fig tree but revealing to them how He did it.

And Jesus is thus able to speak to them about the power of God that would be available to them, and how to pray to receive it.

Notice that it says Have faith in God – not have faith in your faith.

Because there are people that truly believe that if you truly want something and pray hard enough – that God is obligated to answer your prayer no matter what you ask – church, that is faith in faith and it is not biblical.

Always remember that God is the object of our faith.

Your faith is only as powerful as the object you put it in. If you put your faith in yourself or another mere human, your faith will only accomplish what that object or person is capable of doing.

If you put your faith in the Almighty God for whom nothing is impossible (except going against His own word), then nothing will be impossible for you. That is the point Jesus makes here.

And where there is a genuine faith in God – there will be fruit.

Because faith in God will result in a changed life, one lived in obedience to His will.

**[Mar 11:23 NKJV] 23 "For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast**

**into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.**

It is hard to imagine what the disciples were thinking as Jesus spoke these words to them.

Did Jesus really mean that the disciples were going to be able to move physical mountains???

One of thing that we have to remember is that God does and will move mountains.

Let's look at an Old Testament example.

**[Zec 4:5-7 NKJV] 5 Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord." 6 So he answered and**

**said to me: "This [is] the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD of hosts. 7 'Who [are] you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel [you shall become] a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone With shouts of "Grace, grace to it!" ' "**

Zerubbabel was tasked with rebuilding the Temple after the Babylonian captivity. It was tough going.

The task wouldn't be accomplished by Zerubbabel's might or power. The job would be done by the Holy Spirit.

And when the last stone was put in place, people will be marveling at God's grace.

In every one of our lives, God has and will remove the mountains in our lives.

In the movie that we saw Wednesday night, Louis Zamperini had mountains in his life.

Alcohol addiction and hatred –

And we saw God remove those mountains from his life as he fell to his knees.

Many of us still have mountains in our lives –

It might be a health issue. It might be finances. It might be a relationship. It might be a job. It might be our family.

But God can cast out those mountains if we come to Him in prayer and if it is His will.

**[Mar 11:25-26 NKJV] 25 "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you**

**your trespasses. 26 "But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."**

Faith & forgiveness go hand in hand.

Our unwillingness to forgive others is a reflection on our lack of faith.

### Corrie ten Boom

Corrie ten Boom was a World War II concentration camp survivor.

And because of everything that she witnessed at the hands of her captives, she struggled with forgiveness. She was a believer and in her mind, she had forgiven those that wronged her.

However, when she would go to bed, she would rehash the events that occurred and it would result in many sleepless nights.

So she writes in one of her books that she finally went to her pastor and her pastor point out the bell tower of the church.

And he explains to her that the bell is rung by pulling on the rope, it is not until the rope is released that the intensity of the dings and the dongs slowly comes to an end.

So the pastor told Corrie that forgiveness works the same way, when we forgive, we let go of the rope. However, if we keep rehashing what has happened – in other words, we keep on pulling at the rope, the sound of the bell will never go away.

Jesus instructs us that our faith needs to be forgiving. We need to forgive those who have offended us if we are to go on in faith unimpeded in our walk with God.

So our text takes us into the temple and when Jesus walks into the temple, the religious rulers come to Him and begin to test Jesus.

Now keep in mind that these were the same people that Jesus had confronted earlier in the chapter when He cleansed the temple.

Who do you think You are???

This is what they have come and asked Jesus.

Notice that they are not questioning Jesus regarding what He had done at the temple the day before, all they are questioning in by what authority is He doing these things.

You see these religious rulers – they were the ones that validated you. And Jesus, in their opinion, did not have the proper credentials to be speaking in the temple.

The other gospels tell us that Jesus was preaching the gospel when He was confronted by the religious rulers.

**[Mar 11:29-30 NKJV] 29 But Jesus answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one question; then answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things: 30 "The baptism of John--was it from heaven or from men? Answer Me."**

Jesus is not eluding their question.

What Jesus is doing here is He is having the religious rulers answer their own question.

It was a common practice among the Jews to answer a question with a question. It served to further focus the intent of the original question.

And Jesus uses the baptism of John because -

The "baptism of John" is a summary for His entire ministry of preaching repentance and faith, and baptism on account of the remission of sins.

Obviously this was a brilliant question from Jesus, on several levels. For one thing it would expose their total inability to recognize those whose authority came from Heaven.

These religious rulers had evaluated John the Baptist, but refused to validate that he had been sent by God.

With thousands upon thousands of Jews going out into the wilderness to be baptized by John, it was the Sanhedrin's responsibility to give it a thumbs-up or a thumbs-down. To ignore it, as they did, was to show how spiritually bankrupt they were. It showed a total disregard for the spiritual well-being of those they ought to be shepherding.

They had no spiritual insight, no spiritual gifting at all, to be leaders, or to evaluate ministries.

They were staring their Messiah right in the face, but could not recognize Him on account of their own pride and prejudice.

It is not that the religious rulers could not answer Jesus' question –

It is that they chose to **not answer** the question because it would be costly to them.

Because to acknowledge John would mean that they would have to acknowledge Jesus.

And to acknowledge Jesus, they were not willing to lose their life and take up the cross and follow Jesus.

You see, the religious rulers have the same problem as the rich young ruler, but instead of money – they don't want to give up their status within the community.

Their status was their god. And this is what leads them to plot to kill Jesus.

The biggest problem with the religious rulers is that when they came to question Jesus, they did not seek what is true or what is right –

They were only looking for what is safe -

And every time we come to word of God, we must remember that we will always get truth.

This is one of the reasons that many people will not pick up their bibles. It is not that they don't have enough time, it is that they are afraid of the truth that is going to reveal the thing or things that is hindering their relationship with God.

Santa Cruz

Now, before we get into chapter 12 and cover the parable of the wicked vinedresser, I want us to turn to Isaiah 5.

This will give us a little background on the verse we are going to study in this chapter.

**[Isa 5:1-7 NKJV] 1 Now let me sing to my Well-beloved A song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard On a very fruitful hill. 2 He dug it up and cleared out its stones, And planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, And also made a winepress in it; So He expected [it] to bring forth [good] grapes, But it brought forth wild grapes. 3 "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. 4 What more could have been done to My vineyard That I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected [it] to bring forth [good] grapes, Did it bring forth wild grapes? 5**

**And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; [And] break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. 6 I will lay it waste; It shall not be pruned or dug, But there shall come up briars and thorns. I will also command the clouds That they rain no rain on it." 7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts [is] the house of Israel, And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; For righteousness, but behold, a cry [for help].**

The Lord says, plainly, that Israel is the vineyard. Trouble was, they were not walking with Him.

The prophet Jeremiah records their behaviors. He says that, among other things, they were oppressing the poor and widows, and that they were worshipping idols in the Temple.

On account of the failure of the people of Judah to walk with the Lord, God would "lay waste" the vineyard. After many warnings, He would allow them to be overrun, and taken captive, by the nation of Babylon.

As Jesus tells the Parable of the Vineyard, the leaders recognize He is speaking about them.

Like the leadership during the time of Isaiah, they had failed to walk with God. Apart from genuine repentance, they, too, were headed for destruction.

Once we understand the background, the parable itself is pretty straightforward.

**[Mar 12:1-12 NKJV] 1 Then He began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge around [it], dug [a place for] the wine vat and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. 2 "Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that he might receive some of the fruit of the vineyard from the vinedressers. 3 "And they took [him] and beat him and sent [him] away empty-handed. 4 "Again he sent them another servant, and at him they threw stones, wounded [him] in the head, and sent [him] away shamefully treated. 5 "And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some. 6 "Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, 'They will**

respect my son.' 7 "But those vinedressers said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' 8 "So they took him and killed [him] and cast [him] out of the vineyard. 9

"Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others. 10 "Have you not even read this Scripture: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. 11 This was the LORD's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes'? " 12 And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went away.

The role of a vine dresser was very similar to that of being a shepherd.

Their responsibility was to tend the vineyard that they were given oversight over.

The owner of the vineyard was usually paid with a portion of the fruit that was produced from the vineyard.

In this parable,

**The man who plants the vineyard is God.**

The farmers/vinedressers that the landowner rents to are the religious leaders of the nation of Israel.

The vineyard is the nation of Israel.

After sometime, the owner expecting fruit, sends one of his servants and the vinedressers beat him.

The owner sends another to collect fruit and they treat him worse than the first servant.

The owner sends more and this time the vinedressers start to kill some of the servants.

The servants in the parable represent the prophets that God sent to Israel time-and-time again. Most were mistreated, and many were killed.

Finally, in verse 6 it states that the owner sends his only beloved son.

Again, the owner is looking for fruit – remember what I said last week, all of this is a result of Jesus entering the temple and finding no fruit.

And when the son comes by, the vinedressers kill him as well.

Keep in mind that Jesus is telling this parable to the religious rulers. Here in verse 6-8 - He is telling them what they are about to do to Him.

Finally the owner must act in justice and not with mercy:

Let's look at verse 9 again,

**Mar 12:9 "Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others.**

This verse speaks of the judgment that occurred when Rome destroyed the temple and dispersed the Jews around the world for 2000 years.

So after telling the religious rulers the parable of the wicked vinedressers, in verse 10 and 11, Jesus quotes from Psalm 118 and in doing so – Jesus points out that the religious rulers were the ones that rejected the cornerstone.

So not only were they the vinedresser that rejected the beloved son, they have become the builders that have rejected the cornerstone.

And of course, this makes the religious leaders furious at Jesus but they wouldn't do anything because of the multitudes.

You see, they were more afraid of offending man than they were of offending God.

And the more their hearts rejected the truth, the more callous their hearts became.

In Matthew's account, listen to what Jesus tells the religious rulers after He told them the parable.

**[Mat 21:43-44 NKJV] 43 "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. 44 "And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."**

Jesus is the cornerstone.

If we fall on Him, we will be broken.

**(Mat 16:25 NKJV) "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."**

However, if we wait for Jesus to fall on us, we will be destroyed in judgment.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## Communion

The Lord's Supper is a remembrance of what Christ did for us and a celebration of what we receive as a result of His sacrifice.

Bread/cracker is a representation of His beaten body

Blood – the atonement as our sins are washed away by His blood – as far as the east is to the west.

Paul tells us that “For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes”

