**Have faith in God**

Mark 11:12-26

Key Verse 22

“Have faith in God,” Jesus answered.

**Introduction**

 In this passage Jesus cleansed the temple by driving out those who were buying and selling in the temple courts and cursed the tree that didn’t have fruit. Then Jesus told his disciples to have faith in God. May God help us to learn how to live a powerful and fruitful life in the new year 2016.

1. Read verses 12-14. What happened on the previous day? (1-14) Why did Jesus approach a certain fig tree? (12, 13a) What did Jesus discover about the tree and why did He curse it? (13b, 14)

1-1. Read verses 12-14.

The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. **13** Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. **14** Then he said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard him say it.

1-2. What happened on the previous day? (1-14)

* Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve. (Mk 11:11)
* When Jesus entered Jerusalem, people welcomed him with great joy and excitement, recognizing him as a king.
* Jesus went into the temple courts and looked around at everything. He checked everything about how the temple was being managed and what people were doing there.
* What was happening in the temple reflected the society and nation’s spiritual condition during that time, for the temple was the heart of Israel and the center of people’s spiritual life.
* Jesus’ primary concern is our spiritual condition and our spiritual lives. This includes how we are doing in our relationship with God and how we are serving God.

1-3. Why did Jesus approach a certain fig tree? (12b, 13a)

  ***Jesus was hungry. 13 Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit.***

* Jesus had the same flesh like us. This means he felt hungry and tired just like us. He felt cold or hot depending on the condition of the weather. He served God’s will and his mission with the same physical limitations and sufferings that we face.
* Jesus approached the fig tree because the tree was big and had enough leaves to indicate there was also fruit. Jesus expected this tree to bear fruit.

1-4. What did Jesus discover about the tree and why did He curse it? (13b, 14)

  ***When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. 14 Then he said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard him say it.***

* The tree didn’t have any fruit but only leaves, for it was not the season for figs. It’s believed that Jesus entered Jerusalem during Spring. The main season for a fig tree to bear fruit is Fall.
* But in the Middle East, still bear fruit in the Spring, even though the amount is small. So although it’s not the main season for bearing fruit, one would still expect to find fruit on the fig tree during the Spring.
* Jesus cursed the tree. He was angry that the tree didn’t bear fruit when it was supposed to.
* The fig tree was planted in order to bear fruit. But this tree didn’t produce any fruit, in keeping with its purpose.
* When God created the universe, he created each creature to bear some fruit according to his purpose.
* In other words if they don’t bear fruit, God would judge them. This is true with man’s life as well.

John 15:1-2 says,

 “Jesus said, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. **2** He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.””

* That is the reason why God sent Jesus on earth to help us to bear fruit. By ourselves, it is impossible to bear the good fruit God desires. But when we remain in Jesus, we can bear much fruit.

John 15:4-5 reads,

 “Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing”

* The disciples heard what Jesus said - They took Jesus’ word seriously with great interest.

2. Read verses 15-19. What did Jesus do when he reached Jerusalem? (15, 16) What caused Jesus to respond in this way? What does Jesus teach us concerning the temple? (17) How did the chief priests and teachers of the law respond? (18)

2-1. Read verses 15-19.

On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, **16** and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. **17** And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’ ”**18** The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.**19** When evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

2-2. What did Jesus do when he reached Jerusalem? (15, 16)

  ***On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, 16 and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts.***

* He drove out those who were doing business in the temple courts.
* They made God’s holy temple a marketplace using it as a money making institution.
* The situation of the temple court shows the spiritual condition of Israel, especially that of the religious leaders.
* They lacked the fear of and love for God. Rather their hearts were full of the love of money.
* Jesus cleansed the temple court with holy anger. He couldn’t bear their corruption and blasphemy.
* Jesus was very gentle and never attacked anyone. But he took furious action and displayed his anger when he cleansed the temple.

2-3. What caused Jesus to respond in this way?

 ***And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’”***

* The temple’s purpose was to provide a place where people from all nations could come to pray to God.
* But they made the temple the place where people were making money by cheating others.
* The religious leaders and sellers made contracts and they made money by charging people a high price for animals for their sacrifice.
* Jesus became angry, seeing the wicked things people did, using God’s temple.
* Jesus’ zeal and love for God turned into holy anger toward what they were doing.
* When our hearts are supposed to be filled with fear of God and love for him, but are occupied with other things instead, Jesus is angry.

2-4. What does Jesus teach us concerning the temple? (17)

***“Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’”***

Jeremiah 7:11 reads,

“Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the Lord.”

Isaiah 56:7 reads,

 “these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer.

Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.”

* The temple is the place where God’s people meet with God and interact with him through prayer.
* God’s temple was mentioned in various places throughout the Bible.
* In Genesis 22, God commanded Abraham to offer his one and only son, Isaac at Mount Moriah.

Genesis 22:1-3 reads,

 “Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied. **2** Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah.Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.” **3** Early the next morning Abraham got up…”

* The first temple was built by Solomon. (BC 957)

1 Kings 6:1, 11-14 reads,

 “In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites came out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the Lord.”

 “The word of the Lord came to Solomon: **12** “As for this temple you are building, if you follow my decrees, observe my laws and keep all my commands and obey them, I will fulfill through you the promise I gave to David your father. **13** And I will live among the Israelites and will not abandon my people Israel.” **14** So Solomon built the temple and completed it.”

* God established the temple as a house of prayer where people from all nations could worship God and pray to Him.

Isaiah 2:1-5 says,

 “This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: **2** In the last days the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. **3** Many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.” The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. **4** He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. **5** Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord.”

* The second temple which was smaller than the first, was constructed under the auspices of [Zerubbabel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zerubbabel) in 516 BCE. In 19 BCE, it was later remodeled by Herod the Great and destroyed by the [Roman Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Empire) in 70 CE.



* Jesus Himself became the new temple where people from all nations could approach God and pray to him.

John 2:19 reads,

 “Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

* Now our hearts are also God’s temple that should be filled with the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 reads,

 “Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.”

 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 reads.

 **“**Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst? **17** If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for God’s temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.”

* Both Isaiah's prophecy and Jesus' statement tell us that God's people are to function as a house of prayer both now and in the age to come.
* In this way we can have deep interaction and partnership with our LORD, Jesus.
* The result of this fellowship between God and believers, is God's glory being manifested and revealed here on earth—His love, power, wisdom, creative ideas, unity and favor.
* This is how the redeemed will operate forever in God's family, being moved by God to ask Him for the things that are on His heart so that He will release and accomplish them here on earth.
* When we have joint prayer community or church-wide, we are blessed to know the manifold wisdom of God.

Ephesians 3:10 reads,

 “His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms”

* Unquestionably the church's identity as a house of prayer is significant and the Lord desires to use the praying church as His vehicle to release blessings to the nations.
* May the Lord bless our prayers continually throughout 2016 so that we may serve America and all nations as God’s priests.

2-5. How did the chief priests and teachers of the law respond? (18)

 ***The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.19 When evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.***

* The religious leaders were supposed to repent but they looked for a chance to kill Jesus.
* People were amazed at his teaching but the religious leaders became jealous and worried that they would lose their position.

3. Read verses 20-25. In the morning, what had happened to the fig tree? (20) How did Peter respond? (21) What did Jesus say to him? (22-23) What did Jesus tell the disciples to do when they prayed? (24) What further instruction did Jesus give and why? (25) How can we apply Jesus’ words to our lives, especially in the new year to come?

 3-1. Read verses 20-25.

In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. **21** Peter remembered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!”**22** “Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. **23** “Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. **24** Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. **25** And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”

3-2. In the morning, what had happened to the fig tree? (20)

* In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots.
* In just one night, the tree was withered from the roots. It was completely dead, unable to come back to life at all.
* Jesus demonstrated His power as the Creator. His word had power to wither the tree completely.

3-3. How did Peter respond? (21)

 ***“Peter remembered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!”***

* Peter was surprised seeing what had happened to the withered tree. He could not have expected such a thing to have happened.
* He was amazed at Jesus’ power, seeing this miracle that no ordinary person could perform.

3-4. What did Jesus say to him? (22-23)

 ***“Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. 23 “Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them***

* “Have faith in God.” By this statement, Jesus implied that even Peter could perform miracles by the power of God, if he would have faith in God.
* He also implied that Peter could perform an even greater miracle by throwing a mountain into the sea.
* If we have faith in God, we can do the most impossible or difficult thing. Throwing a mountain into the sea is unimaginable. But if we have faith in God, we can do it.

 Mark 9:33 reads,

 “Everything is possible for those who believed”

Philippians 4:13 reads,

“I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”

* ‘Have faith in God’ means to believe in the Almighty God.
* ‘if anyone says’ – Anyone can experience a great miracle if the person has faith in God.
* ‘does not doubt in their heart’ – Even if we declare our faith in God, if we still doubt, it’s not true faith.
* We have to remove any doubt from our hearts and believe with absolute faith.
* ‘but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them’ – This is the definition of faith.

Hebrews 11:1 reads,

 “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”

* Jesus wanted his disciple to do great works and to bear fruit by having faith in God.
* We can’t bear fruit, overcome challenges, and solve problems because of our limitations, but when we have faith we can overcome all these challenges, beyond our limitations and bear much fruit.
* Disciples of Jesus are those who live by faith in God and do great works of God by faith.

3-5. What did Jesus tell the disciples to do when they prayed? (24)

 ***Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.***

* Prayer is our confession of faith. Faith and prayer are two sides of the same coin.
* We ask God and believe through prayer.
* In prayer we can proclaim the miracle saying, “Mountain, throw yourself into the sea”
* ‘believe that you have received it, and it will be yours’ – We should believe that we have already received what we asked God. We have to pray with full assurance that our prayer has been heard and answered.

James 1:5-8 reads.

 **“**If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. **6** But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. **7** That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. **8** Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.”

* Through prayer we can experience great miracles.

3-6. What further instruction did Jesus give and why? (25)

 ***And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”***

* When we are unforgiving, it blocks our prayers and hinders them from being answered.
* In order for our prayers to be heard and answered, we have to make peace with God first by forgiving others.
* If we don’t forgive others, God doesn’t forgive us and in the condition that our sins are not forgiven our prayers can’t be answered.
* We also must repent of our own sins before we ask God to do a great work.
* If we repent and forgive others, God will give us whatever we ask.

3-7. How can we apply Jesus’ words to our lives, especially in the New Year to come?

* God wants us to bear much fruit and live powerful lives in the New Year.
* How can we live that kind of life? The secret is to have faith in God and to pray.
* By faith in God and prayer we can perform great miracles with God’s power, see the great work of God, and make our new year fruitful and powerful.

**Conclusion**

 We can experience God’s almighty power and do a great work when we have faith in God. God answers our prayer when we pray confidently. May God help us to have great vision and hope for the new year. We can do great works of God and bear fruit through our faith in Him and through the power of prayer.

**One word, “Have faith in God”**