

Markan Sandwiches

(Initiated, inserted, intercalation and interpolations.)

Tuesday Bible Study: 13:00

Session 4: (July 23) Fig Tree and Temple.

Power of 'real' Prayer, The new temple!

Introduction & Prayer

Mark 11:12-25 (NIV)

(Mark 11:12) The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry.

(Mark 11:13) 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.

*(Mark 11:14) Then he said to the tree, "**May no one ever eat fruit from you again.**" And his disciples heard him say it.*

XXX

(Mark 11:15) 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,

(Mark 11:16) and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts.

*(Mark 11:17) 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.'**"*

(Mark 11:18) 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.

(Mark 11:19) When evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

XXXX

(Mark 11:20) *In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots.*

(Mark 11:21) *Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!"*

(Mark 11:22) *"Have faith in God," Jesus answered.*

(Mark 11:23) *"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.*

(Mark 11:24) *Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.*

(Mark 11:25) *And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.*

Key Questions

Any variation in versions being read around the room?

Does this event feel like the Jesus you know?

Why curse a tree. Is curing OK?

How corrupt were those using the temple. Do we use the church appropriately today? Any buying and selling/trade being done?

V22 Have faith! What has this got to do with the tree? Why answer in this way?

Is our prayer powerful as described in v23-25 Why not?

Key points working through. (Verses up?)

Sandwich - Better together?

WHAT? *WHAT DO these passages mean in their context?*

SO WHAT? *SO WHAT do these passages mean for my "progress" on the faith journey in relationship with God.*

Only place where there is a record of Jesus cursing –even if ‘only’ a tree.

Not the season (Timing)

“**Not the season**” about expectation and timing. Some biologists claim with this particular kind of fig tree, fruit precedes leaves, so, seeing leaves, it was natural to expect fruit even though it was not the season for figs that pre fruit would have been evident and it would have been known this tree was not going to be fruitful. The tree was just ornamental -without fruit and purpose.

“it was **not the season** for figs” (v 13). This statement surely has less to do with horticulture than theology. The word for “season” (kairos) is used at the opening of the Gospel, ““The time (kairos) has come,’ said Jesus, ‘the kingdom of God is near”” (1:14). Kairos means a special, critical moment. There is no fruit on the tree because its time has passed. The leafy fig tree, with all its promise of fruit, is as deceptive as the temple, which, with all its bustling activity, is really an outlaw’s hideout (v 17).

Here more than elsewhere the A-episodes admittedly also interpret the B-episode, **for the cursing and withering of the fig tree do, in fact, foreshadow the destruction of the temple.**

Fig Tree/Israel/Jesus

Fig tree is often in the Old Testament a symbol for Israel and punishment when unfaithful. *"I will take away their harvest, declares the LORD. There will be no grapes on the vine. There will be no figs on the tree, and their leaves will wither. What I have given them will be taken from them."* Jeremiah (8:13).

But Jesus is not restoring the temple; he is pronouncing its doom! The fig tree, symbolizing Israel, has been found wanting and judged. Like the fig tree, the temple's function is now "withered from the roots"

"When I found Israel, It was like finding grapes in the desert; When I saw your ancestors, It was like seeing the early fruit on the fig tree." (Hosea 9:10)

"Ephraim is blighted, their root is withered, they yield no fruit. Even if they bear children, I will slay their cherished offspring." (Hos 9:16).

Enacted Parable

The cursing and withering of the fig tree, in other words, are a symbolic or **enacted prophecy (enacted parable)** which can only be understood in light of Jesus' activity in the temple. Jesus himself has replaced the temple as the centre of Israel's faith. Salvation is found in him, not in the temple.

Jesus cursed the tree as an object lesson to not be hypocritical, similar to the Pharisees who claimed to be religious but were fruitless in their lives.

Jesus uses the tree as an example to teach his disciples that through prayer, anything is possible if they ask God.

More Fruit/Expectation

The story signals to the disciples that the end is near and that they should consider what it means when something doesn't bear fruit, especially in relation to the religious leaders.

[Application/Prayer.](#)

[What next? Or both!](#)

Mark 14: 1-2 (3-9) 10-11

Plot to kill Jesus

(Anointing at Bethany)

Mark 14: 53 (54) 55-65 (66-72)

Peters Denial

(Jesus' trial)