



WEEK 7

STUDY GUIDE

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Monday June 6, 2022

Read: Mark 11:7-25

Scripture Verse: *"When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it." Mark 11:7*

Today's Thought:

When we think of the word "parade," thoughts and feelings of excitement and celebration enter our minds. After all, "everyone loves a parade," right? Parades come in all sizes, colors, and sounds. In the beginning, these types of caravans or processions of people gathered to celebrate a person, idea, or event that was above the everyday normalities of life. Some of the earliest known parades date back to pre-historical times based on Spanish cave paintings depicting crowds cheering on the hunters as they brought back their prey. For most of ancient history, parades were arranged for either religious or military purposes or celebrations.¹ Today, we host parades for almost anything ranging from music to sports to war and politics.

In today's text, we read about another parade. A parade that happened over 2000 years ago in Jerusalem, as Jesus entered the holy city. Mark has given us a vivid portrayal of Jesus' teaching and mission in his previous chapters, all pointing in the direction of Jerusalem and the third prediction of Jesus' passion. It would be the city of His betrayal and death. But for the moment, we seek to enjoy the parade. Jesus had told two disciples where to find the colt of a donkey that had never been ridden and bring it to Him. The disciples saw the colt just as He had predicted they would, and they borrowed it and brought it to him. As Jesus approached the colt, they put their robes on it, and He sat on it, ready to be led into the city.

As we prepare ourselves to watch this parade through our minds-eye, let us be reminded of the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9, *"Rejoice with all your heart, daughter of Zion! Shout out loud, daughter of Jerusalem! Look! Your King is coming to you. He is righteous, and he is victorious. Yet he is humble—he's riding on a donkey, yes, on a lowly donkey's colt."* Although to us, a donkey is nothing more than a humble beast of burden, in that day, it was an animal fit for the use of a king. And it fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah.

The city was crowded with people for Passover who lined the streets as Jesus entered. The people began to throw down their clothing and palm branches, carpeting the road as was customary for welcoming a king. Notice what the people shouted as Jesus rode by, *"Please! Deliver us?" Blessed is he who comes in the name of Adonai! (Which means Jehovah our Ruler) Blessed is the coming Kingdom of our father, David! And You in the highest heaven! Please! Deliver us!"* The people watching the parade and shouting praise seem to know and understand who Jesus is but do they? They use royal language and messianic overtones to celebrate Jesus at what we call his triumphal entry, but what triumph were they referencing. The crowd was expecting this King, who rides a donkey, to reestablish Israel's glory by setting up a kingdom on earth by defeating the Roman establishment. Jesus had not come to overthrow the Romans but to bring salvation to the people. Jesus will someday come again to establish His Kingdom on earth, but the time has not yet come.

Jesus accomplished a couple of things by fulfilling this prophecy of the triumphal entry. First, Jesus declared Himself Israel's King and Messiah; and second, He deliberately contested the religious elites. Of course, this challenge triggered the official plot to arrest Jesus and have a sham trial that would ultimately convict him to death on the cross. But it all happened according to God's plan and purpose, His Lamb, must die at Passover. Meanwhile, the people of Israel missed the true meaning of the parade. They were looking for their King to come riding in on a white horse to set up His Kingdom and overthrow the tyrannical Roman rule. And because they missed it, their eyes will be closed to the truth until His second coming at the middle to end of the seven-year tribulation John speaks of in Revelation. The missing of their Messiah caused Jesus to weep over Jerusalem.

I said earlier that "everyone loves a parade," especially one of triumph. But what is so triumphal about Jesus' parade? He rides into town to a plot to kill him. Although then, it may not have looked or felt much like a victory, it was a triumph just the same. Jesus was God's anointed King and Savior; His conquest was spiritual and not military in nature. Jesus' triumph came with His victory over hatred, truth over error, and life over death. In just a few weeks, his victory over death would lead to the salvation of some 5000 Jews as the Gospel message would begin to transform lives! And it's that same message that has changed our lives today. Our victory comes only in Christ! Have you found that victory? If not, why not join the parade of followers right now by making Him your Savior?

- What is your favorite type of parade and a favorite memory?
- What kind of parade were the people looking for in Jerusalem that day?
- What did the people see in Jesus as he rode into town on a donkey?
- Do you think they saw Jesus as their king? What kind of king?
- What was Jesus' mission as their Messiah?
- What did the triumphal entry accomplish?
- How does Jesus' triumphal entry bring you victory today?

Further Reading: Luke 19:35–38

Tuesday June 7, 2022

Read: Mark 11:7-25

Scripture Verse: *“Not too far away, he saw a fig tree. It was covered with leaves. He went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves. It was not the season for figs. Then Jesus said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again!” And his disciples heard him say it.” Mark 11:13-14*

Today's Thought:

Having made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, it had become late in the day, so Jesus and the disciples went and spent the night in Bethany. And in the morning, as they were heading back to town, Mark tells us they were hungry. Not far from where they were walking, there was a fig tree. As Jesus and the disciples closed in on this tree, they discovered only leaves because it was not the season for there to be fruit. It was Passover season which takes place each year from late March to early April. Fig trees don't begin to bear any fruit until June, with another crop in August and the third yielding in December. Interestingly, in this particular instance, there is no indication that Jesus had any special knowledge guiding Him concerning the tree, because He had to go and examine the tree himself. We know that Jesus had the power to kill the tree, so why didn't He use that same power to make the tree produce fruit?

It seems out of place for us to see Jesus act in judgment as he does here; unfortunately, this is the only thing God can sometimes do. Upon seeing no fruit, Jesus condemns the tree so that it can never produce fruit again. His symbolic act of denouncing the tree illustrates the sad spiritual condition the nation of Israel displayed. Israel lived with many privileges and opportunities as God's chosen people, but outwardly they were like a fruitless tree, while inwardly, they were corrupt in the temple.

Jesus teaches us two lessons by his condemning of the fig tree. The first lesson is on failure. God's chosen people had failed to produce any fruit for the Kingdom. Like the fig tree, Israel had nothing but leaves. And as I look at America today, a supposed "Christian" nation, I see only leaves. The spiritual roots of Israel had become dry, causing the tree to die. How long will God delay in condemning US for the same failure? Or are we under His judgment now? When a country dries up spiritually, it typically starts at the roots. As long as we are on this side of heaven, we must seek to produce fruit for the Kingdom. Not to produce fruit for us is sin;

we must do our best to cultivate our spiritual roots in a dying culture and not ever settle for only leaves.

In addition to teaching us about failure, Jesus used this miracle to teach us faith. When the disciples walked by the tree the next day, they noticed it was dead, to which Jesus said, "have faith in God." In other words, we should trust God constantly and live with an attitude of complete dependence on Him. Jesus said if we have faith the size of a mustard seed, we could move mountains, that is, those insurmountable problems that can stand in our way.

As followers of Christ, we must not stand as trees only full of leaves with no promise of fulfilling a harvest. We must be about the work of cultivation and producing fruit for the Kingdom of God. We should have not only an outward beauty but also an inward beauty, with faith and strength to allow God to produce fruit through us. Part of watering our spiritual roots comes by spending time in God's Word and talking to Him daily through prayer. How full is your watering can?

- What is your favorite fruit tree? Why?
- Why were there no figs on the tree?
- How is the fig tree symbolic of Israel and today's church?
- What two topics was Jesus teaching us about?
- What must we do to cultivate and produce fruit for the kingdom?

Further Reading: Matthew 21:18-19

Wednesday, June 8, 2022

Read: Mark 11:7-25

Scripture Verse: *“When Jesus reached Jerusalem, he entered the temple area. He began chasing out those who were buying and selling there. He turned over the tables of the people who were exchanging money. He also turned over the benches of those who were selling doves.” Mark 11:15*

Today's Thought:

We've all heard of or been to a church bake sale for missions or a garage sale to help teens pay their way to camp. Both are noble causes, and I am pretty sure they never took place in the church foyer leading into the sanctuary. However, there's something about anything that disturbs the sanctity of God's house, the room where we are to worship Him. I guess you can call me "old-fashioned."

In Mark 11:15, we read of not the first time, but the second time Jesus entered the temple area to find it filled with buyers and sellers. Whether we grew up in a church or not, I believe that most people today hold a special place in their hearts and minds about the area set aside for worshipping our God. I know it's just a building made of brick and mortar and that God's Spirit lives in us, but I still believe in the sacredness of the place where believers together seek God. And Jesus did too. When He entered the Gentile court area, Jesus found it once again filled with merchants and money changers which the religious elites permitted them to do. Of course, those religious leaders allowed this mall of convenience to travelers coming for Passover at a fair percentage to the merchants and money changers. Everyone involved was making a generous profit. How thoughtful of them.

I think part of what upset Jesus about this whole affair taking place in the court of the Gentiles was that it was supposed to be an area where the Jews were busy doing missionary work. Unfortunately, they weren't taking their mission very seriously. Any Gentile who would have entered the courtyard and saw what was going on would probably not be too interested in a God whose followers acted this way. The court of the

Gentiles was to be an area set aside for praying, but it had once again become a den of thieves. Because the buyers and sellers had set up shop again and were taking advantage of the Passover crowd, Jesus chased the merchants and money changers out of the temple courtyard with great enthusiasm. All who came to worship and celebrate Passover, even the very poor, had become victims of these shady merchants, and this grieved Jesus greatly because He was always sensitive toward the poor.

As the disciples watched Jesus clean His house, Jesus quoted Isaiah 56:7, *"Then I will bring them to my holy mountain of Zion. I will give them joy in my house. They can pray there. I will accept their burnt offerings and sacrifices on my altar. My house will be called a house where people from all nations can pray."* and Jeremiah 7:11, *"My Name is in this house. But you have made it a den for robbers! I have been watching you!" announces the Lord.*" The words of the prophets made a good defense for what Jesus was doing. Jesus exposed the buyers and sellers, and He revealed the sins of the religious elites, for they, too, were a part of this scheme. Although the Jews primarily saw the temple as a place for sacrifice, Jesus saw it as a place for prayer. And taking time to pray was an act of sacrifice to God. Jesus viewed the Jewish religion from a spiritual perspective, while the religious leaders pushed a more traditional view muddled with manufactured rules and regulations. Jesus was more concerned that what went on in the temple was coming from their hearts, not about following rules.

As you can imagine, this event quickly got back to the religious leadership, which was in high gear to find a way to arrest Jesus. And we know that Judas would come to their aid in solving their problem. Before we are too harsh on the Jewish religious leaders, have we examined our ministries to see if we are selling the Gospel? Do those who enter our buildings think of it as a house of prayer? Do we come to church to maintain our reputation or worship and glorify God? If Jesus were to show up at your church this weekend, what changes would He make? What changes would He want to complete in you?

- **Why do most people consider a church building/sanctuary a special place?**
- **What happened to the court of Gentiles that upset Jesus?**

- Does it surprise you that this is the second time Jesus had to clear the temple? Why or why not? What does that tell us about the religious elites?
- Why do you think Jesus quoted the prophets while he was cleaning His house?
- Spend some time answering and discussing the questions posed in the final paragraph of today's thought.

Further Reading: Jeremiah 7:1-16

Thursday, June 9, 2022

Read: Mark 11:7-25

Scripture Verse: *“He would not allow anyone to carry items for sale through the temple courtyards. Then he taught them. He told them, “It is written that the Lord said, “ ‘My house will be called a house where people from all nations can pray.’ (Isaiah 56:7)”*

Today's Thought:

As Jesus entered Jerusalem that day, He headed straight for the confrontation that awaited Him. We repeatedly see throughout the Gospels that Jesus came to fulfill a mission from the Father, and nothing was going to stop Him. Jesus immediately upon arrival from Bethany entered straight forth into the temple area. There are many contributing factors to consider for why they wanted to kill Jesus, but none are as clear as the actions He took in the temple courts. His temple cleansing activity would be one of the significant charges against Him at his mock trial. Jesus' act of clearing the Temple would also become a source of the mocking he took from bystanders while on the cross.

The Temple had a place of meaning and significance in the life of every Jew. It was the one place on earth where God's presence dwelt, where heaven and earth intersected, both spatially and functionally. Theologian R.T. France put it this way: "The Temple was not only the heart of Israel's religious life but also the symbol of its national identity. The rededication and purification of the Temple in 164 B.C. after Antiochus Epiphanes had defiled it with the worship and the altar of Zeus and the restoration of temple worship were the high points of the Maccabean victory and were commemorated annually thereafter in the Feast of Dedication in December [modern Hanukkah]. The patriotic as well as religious symbolism of the Temple was thus enormous, and the magnificence of Herod's rebuilding matched its symbolic significance.⁸"

However, the Temple had become just another common place to buy and sell, which is not its intended use. Jesus wasn't against people buying and selling or making a living. He knew people had traveled great distances to be at the Passover and couldn't bring sacrifices with them. Jesus' concern was the people were making these transactions in the wrong place and were using the court of the Gentiles as a shortcut through the city. The people were trampling through the Temple irreverently and not respecting it as a house of prayer. Here in the Court

of the Gentiles, Jesus was teaching by a command that they see this place as a "sacred space." It was His call to Israel to see themselves as a "kingdom of priests" and remember the original covenant made with Abraham 'that all peoples of the earth will be blessed through you.' And Israel was falling short, and it began with their lack of respect in the Temple. And the Jewish leaders were not only guilty of irreverence but insurrection against the Temple of the Lord.

- What do we learn about Jesus from his approach to the situation?
- What do you think was going through Jesus' mind during this moment?
- Why was the cleansing of the Temple used to mock Jesus at the cross?
- Why was the Temple so important to the people of Israel?
- How were the chosen people of God falling short of their calling?
- What is our calling as followers today? How are you fulfilling it? Or are you falling short?

Further Reading: Exodus 19:6; Gen. 12:3

Friday June 10, 2022

Read: Mark 11:7-25

Scripture Verse: *“Peter remembered. He said to Jesus, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree you put a curse on has dried up!” “Have faith in God,” Jesus said. Mark 11:21*

Today’s Thought:

After clearing the Temple courts, Jesus and the disciples left town for the evening. As they returned to Jerusalem in the morning, they came to the fig tree again. The tree which Jesus had earlier cursed was dried entirely down to the roots. Peter called out to Jesus upon seeing the tree, remembering what had happened a day ago and recognizing the prophetic fulfillment of His words. I am not sure that any of the disciples, let alone Peter, understood the link between what happened to the tree and at the Temple. But when we look at the leaf-filled tree and the Temple, we see two things that show great promise, yet when we examine them closer, we find them lifeless. Jesus wants us to understand more about what the tree and temple were like (why they were lifeless) than concerned with their fate (curse).

Suddenly the focus moves from “curse” to “faith.” Jesus’s response to Peter concerning the tree was “have faith in God and prayer.” With His words, Jesus brings context to the day’s events. He wanted them to understand what was coming with His next visit to the Temple and the coming confrontation with the religious leaders regarding authority. Mark gives us a foretaste of the future Christian community after the Temple is destroyed, and Jesus has gone back to the Father in heaven. With no physical Temple, a praying community (Church) would take its place. Each one of us is now a house of prayer.

Prayer isn’t any more powerful because it is offered in a Temple. It is powerful because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, which creates for us direct access to our God, a Temple built not by hands. Jesus instructs all His disciples, including us, to place our complete trust in God and His power alone and not in a building. Jesus defines faith in terms of prayer with a right heart. Through the power of prayer, we can forgive others. His atoning action is available directly through prayer and not a priest or building. We have open access to God because the curtain was torn in two that separated us from the Holy of Holies.

NOTES

No longer do we need to go to the Temple or church to find the presence of God. He is present with us all the time through the giving of His Spirit! (You still need to be in church every week.)

- What is the link between the cursed fig tree and the Temple?
- Why did Jesus want the disciples and us to see what they were like?
- What is the new focus based on Jesus' response to Peter?
- What lesson(s) was Jesus teaching about prayer?
- What makes prayer a powerful tool?
- What gives us open access to God through prayer?

Further Reading: Hebrews 10:19-22



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