

The Gospel of Mark

Part 16: The Withered Fig

Mark 11: 12-14, 20-25 • Pastor Dean Lancaster • January 20, 2019

We pick up our examination of Mark's Gospel and the beginning of Holy Week. Jesus begins his last week before his death, by giving clear distinctions between followers and the faithless.

Here we see three items Jesus highlights as he nears the end of his earthly ministry: **Fruit, Faith and Forgiveness.**

Fruit

Mark 11:12–14 *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. ²⁰ 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.*

People can look genuine on the outside, yet are fruitless when examined:

Talk without feeling

Regrets without repentance

Resolve without action

Opinion without faith --Charles Spurgeon

Where we see Christians we expect to see Christ.

Where there is no fruit the church withers.

Faith

Mark 11:22–24 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.

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Warning:

This does not mean that if we pray hard enough or really believe, God is obligated to answer our prayers.

"You" here is plural.

The adage that there is "strength in numbers" is never more true than in prayer.

Matthew 18:19–20 "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

Forgiveness

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."*

A true believer loves Jesus and others with a love demonstrated by accepting the forgiveness of Jesus (humility) and granting forgiveness to another (grace).

Matthew 6:14–15 *For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*

Ephesians 4:32 *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

Without true repentance, admitting we have failed to be good enough to approach God, how can we offer grace to someone else?

Without a forgiving heart, our prayer are not answered.

Take this with you...

- All Christians at some point struggle with bearing fruit because of a lack of faith and lack of forgiveness.
- When the church prays, mountains move!
- What items would you be willing to gather other believers to pray together for?
- Unforgiveness destroys churches and relationships.