

"Have Faith In God"

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[0 : 00] If you could open your Bibles, please. After Mark chapter 11, the section of the book. We'll read in our own focus on the verses from 11 through to the verse that's Mark 26.

Sometimes when we're watching a programme on television, a drama, a detective series, you're following the story, you're following the plot line as it's told by the director.

And sometimes this one scene comes to an end. The camera which has been going from person to person and scene to scene, it seems to linger and just hover for a moment on a particular point or a particular person or a particular landmark.

Nothing's said, but it's just focus on that thing for a second or two longer than we would expect. And you're left wondering as the scene comes to an end.

Why was that? Was there significance in that place? Should we be watching carefully that person? They're wondering what the director is trying to say by leaving Finn's hands that way.

[1 : 25] And that's a technique which didn't originate in the movie theaters. That's a technique that we find consistently in scripture. It's exactly what Mark is doing.

He's got the Holy Spirit leading in verse 11. We've just had a scene that's full of drama, noise, excitement.

As Jesus comes into Jerusalem, the triumphal entry. And all the crowds are cheering and the palm branches are waving.

And we wonder, as Jesus comes into Jerusalem, as the crowds begin to dissipate, what happens next?

What will he do when he arrives at his destination? And Mark says in verse 11. Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple.

[2 : 23] He looked around at everything. Since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve. To focus him.

Jesus, he goes into the temple. He said, you can picture him looking around at everything. Said nothing.

And then, because it's late, he returns to the Bethany. And that's supposed to provoke within us the question.

What's he looking at? What's coming tomorrow morning? And Mark tells us, as he continues in the narrative here, it says in verse 12.

The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. And that's one point, actually, I wanted to just park up on for a second. It kind of dates to the floor a little bit, but I think it's something that it's necessary for us to note this often.

[3 : 29] Just in the last verse, the 11, we read about Jesus looking and then withdrawing because it's already late. The suggestion there, I think, is because it's late, Jesus is tired.

In the next verse, after leaving Bethany, it tells us, Jesus was hungry. And these are the little details, but they're little details that we shouldn't overlook.

This is the God of man. This is almighty God. But he is man. Because he is man, he gets tired.

But it's late. And he gets hungry. He has the same struggles. He has the same appetite.

He has the same pressures that we feel. J.C. Riles said this. Expressions like this. Jesus' hunger should teach us the condescension of Christ.

[4 : 36] How wonderful they are as we reflect on them. He who is the eternal God. He who made the world and all that it contains.

He from whose hand the fruits of the earth, the fish of the sea, the fowls of the air, the beasts of the field, all at their beginning.

He, even he, was pleased to suffer hungry when he came into the world to save sinners.

It's quite a thought. It's quite a thought. The humanity of practice. It's quite a thought. It's quite a thought. It's quite a thought. It's quite a thought. It's quite a comfort for us to know. When we are tired. When we are hungry. When we are stressed. When we are struggling. When we are grieving. When we are broken. We can come to a God in prayer.

[5 : 34] He knows what it feels like. He condescended. To the point that he felt what we feel. That is in sight.

He followed the chapter this night. The next day. As they were leaving Bethany. Jesus was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree and 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 fig. Then he said to the tree. May no one ever eat fruit from you again. And his disciples heard him say.

This is actually the last miracle that Mark reports. Other than the resurrection of Jesus. And it's a miracle that has caused a lot of people.

To be perplexed. Reflexed. We would love to take five minutes. And just go around to the microphone. And ask the question. What do you mean by this? Because it's a hard miracle for us to understand.

[6 : 42] What's Jesus doing here? What's he doing? In coming to this fig tree. Out of season. And cursing it.

When it doesn't actually produce the fig. That he appears to be looking for. Even though it's out of season. I did this. Many, many times over the years.

And thought. What on earth is all this about? I remember back to the university days. And I remember one. A vending machine. That used to be outside one of the university libraries.

And when you were going to exam pay. These were the machines. That used to just keep you going. As you were studying. It didn't work for a long time. She went to the vending machine.

And got a Snickers or a whatever. And this one machine. That I was the medical team. Was infuriating. Sometimes when you were hungry. You would go out.

[7 : 37] You'd put your money in. Make a selection. And out would come to the chocolate bar. And out of times you would go. And put your money in. And make exactly the same selection.

And it would swallow your money. And it would give you nothing. So you're hungry. You're now painless. And you're infuriating. And I saw that machine being kicked.

And cursed many times. Over the course of four years. Some people actually think. That this miracle. Is similar to that.

Some people think. That this is a bad tempered miracle. But Jesus is hungry. He sees a fig tree. It has leaves in it.

Which indicate that there should be fruit. But there's no fruit. So a bad tempered miracle. Some say. Jesus lashes out.

[8 : 34] And he curses this tree. J.B. Phillips. Who's normally very reliable. Speaks of Jesus. Venting his feeling of frustration. And despair.

On the fig tree. Bertrand Russell. 20th century philosopher. He wrote a book called. Why I am not a Christian.

And he cites. The cursing of this fig tree. As one of the main reasons he has. For not following Jesus. I'm not a Christian. Says Russell.

Because. Because Jesus is not nice to fig trees. But to think that way. To think that this is a bad tempered miracle.

Is to totally misunderstand. What's going on. When did we ever see Jesus. Before. Or after. Show bad temper. When did we ever see him.

[9 : 32] Lock. With frustration. And vent. In a way that was lacking self-control. We never saw it before. And even when he goes to the cross.

We don't see it then. That's certainly not. What's going on. In this miracle here. So what is going on. What Jesus. Is teaching his disciples.

This miracle. Is an acted out parable. A parable. That was connected. To everything. That Jesus saw. When he went into the temple.

Remember that's the last scene. Jesus walks into the temple. He looks around at everything. And he goes back. And he goes back. And he goes back. And he goes back. And he goes back. And he goes back. And he goes back. And he goes back.

Next scene. A few of the fiction. This is a parable. Where Jesus. Is connecting. What he saw in the temple.

[10:31] And what he didn't see in the temple. With what he would do. For this fiction. There's two lessons that we learned. After this parable. First of all.

There's a lesson about failure. And secondly. There's a lesson about faith. Two points for today. First of all. A lesson about failure.

Today. I think. Probably more so than past generations. People don't like talking about failure. I believe.

I'm not sure of this. But I believe in some family schools. They don't use the character. To them. And we're reading a document. Some years ago. That was advising family teachers.

Don't speak about failure. Speak to your pupils about deferred success. You have a desk. You do horribly in it. You didn't fail it. But success is deferred.

[11:26] That's the case. My higher man. Is still in a state of deferred success. That's our culture. But for many of us here. This morning.

You're probably able to remember. That was a day. It was very easy to do an exam. You sat in paper. There was a pass mark.

If you hit the pass mark. You passed. If you didn't hit the pass mark. You failed. And you can probably remember teachers. That didn't hesitate to tell you.

Very clearly and strongly. That you. Had failed. And in this parable. Jesus. He declares that.

The script tree. Had failed the test. That was sent for him. He came looking for fruit. He found man. And so he declared judgment on it.

[12:26] He pronounced a bold. Solid. Clear. Categorical. Fear. But some might be. Here this morning.

Saying well that just seems a bit unfair. Some might feel. Some degree of. Sympathy for the. The victory. Because it tells us in verse. 13.

It wasn't the. The season for fix. So why does Jesus come to that. Fixing. Out season. Looking for fix.

And then. Curse it. For not having fix. Well one commentator. Tells us. I think probably enough. For us to. To understand. What's going on. He explains. That there was two.

Types of fix. That grew. In this place. At that time. It felt like. Earth and take those. You have the earliest. And you have the dates. And in March 8th though. The early fix.

[13:22] Would come on. To the. The victories. And. Late in the year. August. To October. There were. There were larger. Fix. That were. Were gathered. The ones that we would recognize.

Now this. Is Passover time. So. It's either in late March. Or early April. So the fix. That Jesus. Would have been looking for. Were the early fix. And we're also told.

That. These early fix. If they were on trees. They were always on trees. That were. Fit with leaves. And we're given the detail here. That this tree. Verse 13. Was. In leaf.

So it wasn't unreasonable. For Jesus. To come up. And find. Expect to find. Through there. For as we. Know. Although there were many leaves.

On this tree. There was no fruit. Although there was plenty of promise. That Jesus approached them. There was actually nothing.

[14:23] That was delivered. That he could bite into. The picture was a failure. The picture was a bit of a fraud. As was the temple.

That Jesus looked at. In verse 11. Jesus came to the temple. Just as he came to the. Victory.

He came to his father's house. Looking for spiritual fruit. And found. That it was just as barren.

As the picture. And yes. It was a building. It was structurally. Very impressive. In terms of what was going on. It was. It was busy.

It was a place of great importance. There were many people. Who were coming to it. There were lots of leaves. But there was no fruit. The temple of Jesus.

[15:26] Looked around. At everything. He looked at his father's house. A house of prayer. And he declared.

That it had been turned. Into a den. Of roars. He went into the heart of the temple. Actually. Where. There was. Supposed to be all. Nations. Not just Jews. Gathering. He went. He went to the part of the temple. Where there should have been.

The clear. Declaration. Of the gospel. Of salvation. And yet. There was nothing. Just the noise of.

Money being exchanged. And deals being done. There was no. Zeal for God's glory. There was no desire. For souls to be saved.

[16:28] There was only self-interest. So what does Jesus do? He flows over the tables. It's a picture I love.

Because it's so. Kind of just to everything. We're taught about Jesus. Culture. We're giving a cultural picture. Of Jesus with. Soft hands. And soft hair.

Here we see a carpenter. With musk-roar. Blanky. Thrown over tables. Driving out. Money makers. Bringing. Bringing. Everything. That's supposedly going on. In God's name. To a halt. By force. Do you like the.

The fig tree. The temple. And God's people. Israel. They failed. The test. Of God. They had a form.

[17:29] Of Godliness. About them. They had a mass. Of spirituality. In everything. They were doing. But there's no laughter.

Plenty of leaves. There's no fruit. And when Jesus. Saw it. He declared. The temple. To be.

A family. What does this. Have to do. Of anyone else. The sin of fantasy.

Venient leaves. No fruit. Sin of tempo. Relativity. And religion. Of your life.

What does this. Have to do to us. Well. In a sense. Just as Jesus. Came. To the temple. And the fig tree. Back then.

[18:36] You have the promise. That Jesus. Is for us. And still today. He searches. Our hearts. He searches.

Our minds. As we sang. In Psalm 139. So what does he find. As he looks into my heart. As he looks into your heart. What does he see.

As he looks around. At everything. That's going on. In our lives. And in this place. Here today.

Certainly. There are leaves. The leaves of religion.

Are very clear. As we come together. In this way. Because people have. Their life. Sentience. We open the Bible. We sing the Psalms.

We sing the hymns. We bow. Our heads. As people. Leave in prayer. We. We certainly go through.

The motions of religion. And it's right. That we do so. But the question.

[19:38] I think. That's coming through. This parable. Is where is your heart? Is there fruit there? Is there faith? If all we have.

Is religion. And our Sunday routine. And ritual. If that's all. All we have. Then if Jesus. Looks at us.

We fail. If our trust. Is in our. Our church attendance. And our good works. And our. Our good deputations.

And our. If our trust. Even. Is in our. Night by night. Bible reading. If our trust. Is in. The fact that we say. Prayers at particular times. At. At each day.

That in itself. Is not enough. Not enough to save us. Jesus. J.C.

[20:35] Ryle says. Let us take care. That we. Each individually. Learn. The lesson. That the fifth. She conveys. Let us always remember.

That baptism. And church membership. And reception. Of the Lord's Supper. And that diligent. Use of the outward forms. Of Christianity. Are not sufficient. To save.

Our souls. They are these. Nothing. But we. We. We. And without. Fruit. Will add. To.

A condemnation. The message. If you look. In frames. That's what's coming.

Through this. Parallel. We. Are not. Enough. That's the values.

[21:28] We. To where. We. Go from this. What comes next. I think. What we might.

Expect. I think. What we might. Expect. To come next. Would be. A lesson. About judgment. Where there's no fruit.

Just leaves. There. There's judgment. Where there's no fruit. Just leaves. Then we.

With them. Just as the. Fifth tree. Withered. And there was. Cursed. I think that's. The lesson. That we might. Expect. To come next. To Jesus. But actually.

That's not the lesson. That Jesus. Prince. Prince. Verse 20. In the morning. As they. Went along.

They saw. The fifth tree. Withered. From the roots. Peter.

[22:27] Remember. And said. To Jesus. Rabbi. Look. The fifth tree. You've cursed. As withered. Dead. Right down.

To the roots. In 24 hours. It's a minute. Beautiful. Peter. Peter. Sees it. And Peter.

Says to Jesus. Look. Look what you've done. But as Jesus. Responds to Peter. He teaches a lesson. Not about judgment. But actually.

A lesson about faith. So first of all. We have. A lesson about faith. Through the. Spring tree. In the temple. Both of which. Were failing. And.

So now Jesus. Comes in with the. And teaches a lesson. About faith. So we're hearing. One of our. [23 : 24] Our young students. Talk. And. About how. You want to. The teachers. What? Kind of interjected. In the conversation. And said. What makes.

What makes. The students. So good. You know. Compared to the. Lesson of the teachers. And the answer. The goal was. Well. Before the exams. He tells us. What to advise.

And what not to advise. So we're not having to. Kind of. Look over the whole course. We're not kind of. In a state of confusion. But. We're given a clear. Denectivist. How does he pass this exam. And that. And this person's. Estimation. Was. For the new teacher. The new teacher. Tells you. How facts. And actually.

That's. To God. What he has done here. He's told us. In the past. Parable. How we can fail. Where trust is in religion.

[24 : 21] And nothing more. He tells us. The truth. About that. And then he tells us. The truth. Verse 23. About. How we can be saved.

He tells us. The truth. About what is acceptable. In the eyes of God. And what is not. The past lesson.

Is religion fails. And so Jesus. Is saying. To these pictures. Don't waste your time. With the leaves of religion. They're not enough. So what is it?

What is it? That will. Be acceptable. To God. What is it? That will. Ensure that we get a pass. Into heaven.

And the answer. To that question. Is faith. Verse 22. Have. Faith. In God. Is. Answer.

[25 : 21] Have. Faith. In God. God. What we say. We're not done. We want. To come out of God's. Blessing. Not his curse. We want. To receive life. And not women. Determine. Have. Faith. In God. And this is the same. Message. That is thrown. Over. And over. By Jesus.

To that students. Of the world. Over the generations. Will grasp it. And remember it. And learn. And be saved through it. As parents. The most important things. For our children. We say it time. And time. And time. And time. And time again. Because we know.

[26 : 15] And time. And time. And time. Because we know. That we need to. To get all that repetition. Before we went to our heads. And we are told. Time. After time. In scripture.

Have. Faith. In God. Your good works. Your good religion. It would save you. Have. Faith. In God. Believe. John. John. D16. For God. So loved the world. That he gave his one and only son. That whoever. Believes in him. Shall not perish. Or have eternal life. John. 6:20 and 29. They asked Jesus.

What must we do. To do the works. That God requires. Jesus answered. The work of God is this. To believe. In the one. He sent. The apostles.

[27 : 11] They write. The acts of the gospel message. Acts 16. 31. Believe. In the Lord. Jesus. And you will be saved. And that's the lesson.

That Jesus. Is teaching. Then in this. Context. It's to have faith in him. Have faith in God. Jesus answered.

I tell you the truth. If anyone says to this man. Go throw yourself. Into the sea. Who does not doubt. In his heart. But believes. That what he says. Will happen.

And will be done for him. That's what I tell you. Whatever. You ask. Put it clear. Believe it. You are received. And it will be yours. And when you stand. Then. If you hold.

Anything against. Anyone. Forgive me. So that your father in heaven. May forgive you. Your sins. Believe.

[28 : 06] Says Jesus. And again. Jesus here. He uses pictures. Confess this truth. I warn them. He wasn't. Teaching them. That. That. They could use. Prayer. Like some. Superfire. To reshape. The landscape. The picture.

That Jesus. Paints here. Of. Michael. Being thrown. Into the. Heart. Of the sea. Is a picture. That speaks. About. Impossible. People. You can't do it.

You can't. Go into. The creature. And throw. Into the sea. It's impossible. You can't. You can't. You can't. You can't. To God. These people. Here.

And I. I really. Trust them. With the impossible things. What's the most. Impossible. Thing. For us. To do. Impossible.

[29 : 05] For us. To save. Our sins. It is. Impossible. For us. To shift. The mountain. Of our sin. Into the sea.

Of God's. Of God's. Forgiveness. No amount of good works. We shift that way. No volume.

Of religion. And apply. Our sin. Into that place. Of forgiveness. We can't.

Do it. Only Jesus. Can do it. And that was the very reason.

That we find him. In this place. At that time. In Jerusalem. He was there. To do.

[30 : 03] For them. And for us. What we can never do. For ourselves. To do it. To do it. And when Jesus. Overturned. These tables.

And when he drove out. The money lenders. And when he. He caused a disturbance. In the temple. He was saying. In a sense. In this violent scene. All this stuff.

Is finished. These were pictures. That were pointing. To Christ. Christ. And as we can picture.

These doves.

Flying. From the place. Of sacrifice. Into the open air. Jesus. Was saying. There's no need. For sacrifices anymore. Because he.

The lamb. Of God. Will be the perfect sacrifice. He. Is the one. Who's shed blood. Which will be shed.

[31 : 01] In just a few days. Which cleanses us. From all sin. In fact. There wouldn't even be. Any for the temple.

Because the temple. Of his body. Within just a few days. Time. Be destroyed. And then. Raised back up.

Just. As he had promised. His. There. Salvation. Could be secured. Not by what we do.

Not by religion. But by what Jesus would be. And has not done. To this day.

And his resurrection. To what's left. For us to do. Belief.

[32 : 06] In a sense. It's totally humiliating. And I think that's what causes. So many people to resist. You might look at a job.

And say. A liken to that. And God. Teases us here. Through these pictures. You can do nothing.

To save yourself. Nothing. All. Your religion. If that's where your faith goes. Are just. Dead leaves.

But Christ. Has done. Everything. And your calling. And mine. Is certainly.

To. Belief. I'm just kidding. God.

[33 : 14] God. God. We thank you. For your word. And thank you. For these pictures. That. That Jesus paints. And. And Jesus. Acts out.

For us. In. From this. Paraly. God. We. Thank you. That you. Are the God. Who does search us. And you do know us. And you. Do reveal to us.

Our greatest problems. And yet. The only means of our salvation. We pay that you would forgive us. Because sometimes we. We may.

Be inclined to think. That it's what we do. In our religion. That. That causes us. To win your fame. And yet. We know.

That. There is nothing. That can do. That will cause us. To. Earn our merit. Your salvation. So we thank you.

[34 : 11] That Jesus came. To do exactly. What we could not do. For ourselves. We thank you. That he is. The son. Of God. We thank you.

That he. Is also. The son of man. The one who felt. And feels. What we feel. And so much more than that.

We thank you. That Jesus. Would go on from this place. And we find him. In this chapter. To the cross. We thank you.

That he would suffer. And he would die. And he would rise. So that our sin. To be made an end of. And our salvation. To be secure.

We thank you Lord. That when we see these things. It's because. You are working. In the power. Of your spirit. In our hearts. To open our eyes. We pray Lord.

[35 : 09] That for each of us. Who sees. Our sin. And who sees. What Christ. Came to do. We pray. That we would believe. Not just see.

The Lord. That we would believe. And take hold. Of your amazing grace. That is offered to us. In Jesus. Nothing.

In my hands. I bring. Simply. To that cross. I cling. Naked. Come to thee. For grace. Helpless. Come to thee. For grace. For. I did. The faint. And fly. Wash me. Saved. Or I die. In the name of God.

We pray. To come. For our quenna. And to take hold. Of our salvation. For we ask. These things. And hear it. Amen. Amen. Amen.