



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Week 35: Jesus Turns The Tables

## Read Mark 10:46-11:25

### Intro

The stories in today's text do not seem obviously linked to each other. But it's important to read the whole text as one connected narrative. Mark wrote the text this way intentionally, and it takes a bit of work to see what he is trying to do.

It is also a particularly interesting text because in it we see two very different sides to Jesus. We see him being as gentle as a lamb and as fierce as a lion. *"The lion excels in strength and in the majesty of his appearance and voice. The lamb excels in meekness and patience. . . . is sacrificed for food and clothing. But we see that Christ is compared to both, because in the text the diverse excellencies of both wonderfully meet in him. . . There is in Jesus Christ. . . a conjunction of such really diverse excellencies as otherwise would have seemed to us utterly incompatible in the same subject."* (Jonathan Edwards, 1738).

### 1. Jesus Is A Gentle And Humble King, Responding With Love And Mercy To Those Who Know They Need A Saviour

- Read Mark 10:46-52

The blind beggar, Bartimaeus, asked Jesus for the miraculous instead of asking him for the usual 'bread and money'. He believed that Jesus was the Messiah and so he asked for the "impossible". And in response to his faith, Jesus gave him his sight.

- Read Mark 11:1-10 & Zechariah 9:9

It was common for leaders to ride through the city on a large horse, parading their greatness with people lining the streets cheering them on. Jesus, however, *chose* to ride into Jerusalem on a young donkey. This was not usual for a king, but Jesus was fulfilling the prophecy in Zechariah that he would enter Jerusalem this way. So, while he was indicating that he was in fact their long awaited king, he also demonstrated that he was a humble king. He did not come to parade in his greatness, but he came to lay down his life, in order to save millions.

#### I. Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

- Read Mark 11:12-14

When Jesus came across the fig tree and cursed it, he was making a statement to the disciples, preparing them for what was to happen next when they would all enter the temple. The whole beauty of a fig tree is that it produces figs to eat. But this tree was not doing what it was created to do and so it was no longer valuable.

#### II. Jesus Cleanses the Temple

- Read Mark 11:15-19

Jesus was desperate about the state of the temple, because God's very own people, Israel, had turned it into something it was never intended to be. It was supposed to be a place where people who were far from God could find him and declare their need of him. Now, it was a place where the Jewish men had to pay taxes just to get in and the Gentiles had to remain in their designated area. Instead of the Israelites being a blessing to the nations, they were now just like a tree with no fruit. And instead of their temple being the place of true worship and prayer as God had intended it to be, it was now a place where people made a profit before allowing people to draw near to God.

- ❖ Q: What is the link between the fig tree without fruit and the Israelites in the temple?
- ❖ Q: Why was Jesus so mad at what he saw going on in the temple?
- ❖ Q: Why do you think people find it difficult to imagine Jesus being so angry?
- ❖ Q: What wrong conclusions do they usually draw about him in this story?
- ❖ Q: Why is it wrong for us to sit as judge over Jesus' actions in this story or any other story in scripture?

<sup>1</sup> EDWARDS, J. (1738) *The Excellency of Christ*. [WWW] Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Available from: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/sermons.excellency.html> [Accessed 21/11/2014].



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

## 2. Jesus Is A Just King, Judging Those Who Are Determined To Save Themselves, And Who Keep Others From The Saviour

- Read Mark 11:20-21

### I. The Lesson From the Withered Fig Tree

When Jesus cursed the fig tree he was demonstrating another side of his kingship. He was and is the just judge who would not stand by and do nothing while his people perished in their self-righteousness and religious activities, profiting off people who were earnestly trying to get closer to God through worshipping at the temple.

It's easy to look at the Israelites and judge them for their self-righteous hearts, but the lesson extends to us as church folk as well. Jesus was and is not interested in mere religious activity and the appearance of being holy and healthy, he wants "fruit". He wants real worship from us and he wants prayerful dependence.

- ❖ Q: In what ways are we sometimes guilty of just being involved in religious activity rather than being true worshippers?
- ❖ Q: What do you think true worship looks like for Christ-followers?
- ❖ Q: What do you think it means for us to be in prayerful dependence on God?
- ❖ Personal Reflection Q: Take an honest look at your life right now: you are in a Gospel Community and you attend services and listen to the sermons – so to some degree you have the "appearance" of Godliness. But is there *fruit* in your life that indicates a life and love for God. Are you a true worshipper? Take some time to seek God on what needs to change in your life in order for you to start producing the fruit he is looking for.

## 3. Our Right Response Is To Have Faith In The Just And Gentle King For Forgiveness

- Read Mark 11:22-25

This text is taken out of context all the time. Jesus was not talking about having faith to move literal mountains or to have the kind of faith to achieve any goal you set your mind to. What he was saying was directly linked to what had just happened in the temple and at the fig tree. Trees that have no fruit have no purpose, and are not fulfilling the life God designed them to live. The disciples would have understood that they needed to have real fruit in their lives. But in order to have real fruit, they would need real faith to become radically dependent on Christ. They would need radical faith to seek and find forgiveness in him and they would need to have radical faith in him in order to forgive others. This small section of the text was essentially teaching the disciples of their need for real faith in Christ for their salvation, which the rest of Israel were resistant to hearing.

- ❖ Q: Why do you think Jesus compared the disciples' need for faith for salvation to the same kind of faith they would need in order to move mountains?
- ❖ Q: Why is it so encouraging that our earnest faith in God and the prayer of our heart for salvation is absolutely accepted by him?
- ❖ Q: Why do we need faith in God in order to genuinely forgive others?
- ❖ Q: What is the link between our forgiveness from God and our forgiving of others?