



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V23 N13 March 28, 2021

KING JESUS

"Cleaning House"

Mark 11:12-25

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Worship

I worship God for who he is and what he has done for me.

"Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care."

Psalms 95:6-7



What does prayer look like in your life?

Worship and prayer are closely related by their connection to the temple in Mark 11:12-25. Elsewhere in the Gospel of Mark prayer is a short but interesting study. Jesus is described as praying alone in the Gospel of Mark. After an eventful first day of ministry and miracles in Capernaum, Jesus arose very early and went out to an isolated place, what some translations called a "lonely" or "deserted" place, to pray (Mark 1:35). We are not told the content of his prayer, but we do learn that prayer was a priority for Jesus as he pursued God in prayer early in the day.

Mark records a second account of Jesus praying at night (Mark 6:46-47). Here he climbed a mountain after feeding the 5000 and was again alone. Jesus praying at night and in a different location indicates that prayer for Jesus was not a ritual practice confined to a specific place or a time of day. Jesus prayed at many different times and in many different places.

Jesus did "look to heaven" and "blessed" the food he miraculously shared with the crowds (Mark 6:41). In Mark 8 Jesus "gave thanks" for the bread and "blessed" the fish he passed out to thousands. Jesus also "blessed" the bread he broke and passed out at the last supper (Mark 14:22). Jesus also "blessed" the children who were brought to him (Mark 10:16). Gratitude and supplication for others were significant components of Jesus' prayer life.

Mark also describes Jesus praying in agony in both the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42) and upon the cross (Mark 15:34). In the garden, Jesus was "distressed," "troubled," and in great "sorrow." Prayer for Jesus at times was an emotional experience. Prayer was also an intimate

communication between Jesus and God as he cried out "Abba, Father." These are the words of a child to a father showing closeness and dependence. Jesus repeated this prayer, highlighting the importance of persistence in prayer. On the cross, Jesus quoted scripture as he cried out to God (Mark 15:34). From the first day of his recorded public ministry to his final hours on the cross, Jesus was a practitioner of prayer.

Jesus only taught about prayer twice in the Gospel of Mark. After Jesus cast out a demon, the disciples asked Jesus why they failed to do so. Jesus tersely answered, "This kind can come out only by prayer." According to Jesus, sometimes forces opposing God can only be overcome by intense and consistent pursuit of God, his power and his intervention.

The second and final time Jesus spoke about prayer in Mark is found in our passage today (Mark 11:12-25). Although Jesus mentioned a place of prayer (Mark 11:17), his teaching on prayer focused primarily on faith and dependence upon God to overcome major obstacles and to see God provide in marvelous ways (Mark 11:23-24). Jesus also taught that forgiveness of others must be a governing factor in our prayers. More is to be said about this final lesson in prayer in the balance of our study.

In the Gospel of Mark it is clear that Jesus spent more time actually praying than on giving instructions on prayer. While our study and discussion of prayer is important, we must not forget that prayer is more powerful as a practice than as a lesson. Jesus prayed at many different times and in many different places. Jesus intimately addressed his Father in heaven. We would do well to pray more than talk more about prayer.

12 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.

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, 16 and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. 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.'"

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.

19 When evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

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. 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. 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."

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle each phrase showing a change of location in this passage.
- Underline what Jesus found on the fig tree when he reached it.
- Double underline the phrase that identifies the time of year that Jesus encountered the fig tree.
- Put brackets around the statement Jesus makes to the fig tree.
- Draw a line from the statement Jesus makes to the fig tree to the word Peter used to describe this statement in Mark 11:21.
- Draw a line from the word "disciples" in Mark 11:14 to words in Mark 11:20-21 that correspond.
- Place a sequential number above each of the actions Jesus takes within the Temple.
- Write the Old Testament reference above each phrase Jesus used in his Temple teaching.
- Place a sequential number above each of the actions listed in Mark 11:18.
- Draw a line from the word "faith" to other similar words in Mark 11:23-25.
- Draw a line from the word "praying" to a similar idea in Mark 11:17.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Why would Jesus be upset with a fig tree that had no fruit, especially if it was not fig season?
2. Why would Jesus be upset with the activities he found in the temple?
3. What connections do you see between the fig tree incident (Mark 11:12-14) and Jesus' activity in the temple (Mark 11:15-18)?
4. What was Jesus doing in Mark 11:16?
5. Jesus quotes two passages from the Old Testament in Mark 11:17. What point was he making using these references?
6. Describe the contrasting responses to Jesus' teaching as detailed in Mark 11:18.
7. How do faith and prayer work together (Mark 11:22-25)?
8. Jesus' instructions about prayer in Mark 11:23-24 sound exaggerated. What is Jesus saying and not saying about prayer?
9. Why is forgiveness an important component to prayer?
10. What connections do you see between a healthy prayer life and fruitful ministry?

Commentary On The Text

On Jesus' second day in Jerusalem he headed immediately for the temple. Jesus stayed in Bethany, which was about two miles to the east of Jerusalem. On this path around the Mount of Olives, Jesus expressed his hunger and sought a snack from a roadside fig tree. A fully leaved tree looked promising, but upon inspection had no fruit. Jesus spoke harshly to the tree, and the disciples remembered this strange encounter of Jesus with local horticulture.

Jesus entered the temple, which appeared to be in full foliage of religiosity. But Jesus was incensed at the absence of genuine spiritual fruit in its courts. Instead of worship and prayer, Jesus found a marketplace of greed, exclusion and corruption. Jesus not only spoke harsh words to the fruitless temple, he displayed his authority in his "Father's house" by flipping over merchant tables and driving out those who corrupted a place of prayer with the din of commerce.

On the third day of Jesus' week in Jerusalem, he made his way once again from Bethany to the city on Mount Zion. Coming again around the Mount of Olives, Peter noticed the fig tree that Jesus encountered the day before. In amazement Peter exclaimed that the tree had withered "from the roots." Such a complete reversal of the tree's vibrancy was certainly a sign of Jesus' miraculous powers of judgment.

Many readers of the Gospel of Mark have struggled with the cursing of the fig tree. Many have stated that this episode conflicts with the very character of meek and mild Jesus. To some, this "miracle" appears petulant and selfish. All of Jesus' other miracles are for the benefit of others and never himself. Others struggle with the logic of Jesus' expectations. Mark commented that "it was not the season for figs." How could Jesus reasonably expect fruit from a tree out of season?

Many times in the Gospel of Mark, stories are "sandwiched" between other stories. The combination of the stories informs and provides "flavor" to the stories in combination. In this case, the story of the fig tree "intercolates" or "sandwiches" the incident in the temple. What Jesus observed and said to the fig tree helps us understand what Jesus did and said in the temple. The reader does not fully understand the fig tree story without the temple story and vice versa.

Rather than dismiss Jesus for perceived character flaws or a deficiency in basic biological knowledge, we should look a bit closer at the clues in the passage regarding fig trees and at the relationship of the fig tree story to the temple story.

First, it is interesting to note the emphasis on leaves in Mark's account of the tree. "The repetition of the reference to leaves in the following sentence underscores the importance of this detail. A deciduous tree, the fig tree sprouts leaves in late March and sheds its leaves in late fall. But why the double reference to its having leaves? ... Pliny the Elder noted in his *Naturalis Historia* (16.49), the fig tree stands out as a tree that produces fruit before leaves ... the presence of leaves makes intelligible to Mark's readers why Jesus went to the tree in search of something to eat and adds force to the fol-

lowing statement about its having 'nothing except leaves'" (Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, Vol. 34B, Word Biblical Commentary, 154).

A second clue about the fig tree is found in a consideration of its fruit. Jesus, leaving Bethany on his way to Jerusalem, passed through Bethphage (Mark 11:1). Bethphage means literally "the house of green figs." As Jesus approached a fully leaved fig tree, he expected to find these "green" or "unripe" figs for a fast-food fix. "In the fall the fig tree develops buds that remain undeveloped until early spring, when they swell into green knops, or *paggim*. The leaves of the fig tree develop after this. The knops, which are edible even if not very palatable, develop into the earlier harvest of figs (Song 2:13; Isa. 28:4; Jer. 24:2; Hos. 9:10; Mic. 7:1) that takes place at the end of June. It was these early green knops that Jesus apparently looked for" (Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BECNT, 512).

As Jesus departed from a fruitless fig tree, he entered the Jerusalem temple, which like the fig tree looked vibrant but was inwardly fruitless and undesirable. "Jesus dramatizes the end of the temple by an enacted parable. The leafy fig tree, with all its promise of fruit, is as deceptive as the temple, which, despite its religious commerce and activity, is really an outlaws' hideout (v. 17). The curse of the fig tree is a symbol of God's judgment of the temple" (James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 340).

Jesus' actions in the temple were arresting demonstrations of his authority over the temple (Mark 11:28) as Messiah. "In the OT it was Israel's kings, not prophets, who cleansed and restored the temple: because of the negligence, even dishonesty, of the priests, King Jehoshaphat found it necessary to apply royal pressure in order to bring about the repairs of the temple (2 Kgs 12:1-16)" (Evans, 179). Jesus' words in the temple hearken back to warnings issued by Isaiah (56.7) and Jeremiah (7:11). Fuller reading of these prophetic warnings predicted God's impending judgment upon an unfaithful and unfruitful temple. Jesus would make further statements about the judgment of the temple in Mark 13.

After the temple episode, Jesus passed by the fig tree he had encountered the day before, and Peter noticed that the tree was withered completely as a result of Jesus' curse. As amazing as this incident was, Jesus turned the disciples' attention to the importance of faith in God expressed through prayer. Many in Jesus' day were impressed by the temple and trusted in its presence as proof of divine protection. Jesus' prediction of the judgment of the temple was perhaps even more impressive. Jesus wanted to turn all of this attention upon the temple to a focus on God. "Have faith in God," Jesus countered, and spoke of praying to God who could remove even mountains and do amazing things if followers believed in God and trusted him. Rather than trusting in a structure or edifice, Jesus' disciples were encouraged to pursue God in prayer for their solutions and provisions.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 12 **hungry** “The best explanation is to see the miracle as an acted-out parable. Jesus’ hunger provides the occasion for his use of this teaching device. The fig tree represents Israel (cf. Hos 9:10; Nah 3:12; Zech 10:2). The tree is fully leafed out, and in such a state one would normally expect to find fruit. This symbolizes the hypocrisy and sham of the nation of Israel, which made her ripe for the judgment of God. ‘A people which honoured God with their lips but whose heart was all the time far from him (7:6) was like a tree with abundance of leaves but no fruit . . . (Cranfield, *Gospel of Mark*, pp. 356-57)’” (Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, Vol. 8, 726).

v. 13 **leaves** “After the fig harvest from mid-August to mid-October, the branches of fig trees sprout buds that remain undeveloped throughout the winter. These buds swell into small green knops known in Hebrew as *paggim* in March–April, followed shortly by the sprouting of leaf buds on the same branches, usually in April. The fig tree thus produces fig knops before it produces leaves. Once a fig tree is in leaf one therefore expects to find branches loaded with *paggim* in various stages of maturation. This is implied in 11:13, where Jesus, seeing a fig tree in full foliage, turns aside in hopes of finding something edible. In the spring of the year the *paggim* are of course not yet ripened into mature summer figs, but they can be eaten, and often are by natives (Hos 9:10; Cant 2:13). The tree in v. 13, however, turns out to be deceptive, for it is green in foliage, but when Jesus inspects it he finds no *paggim*; it is a tree with the signs of fruit but with no fruit” (James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 339-340).

v. 15 **temple courts** “Although it is commonly assumed that the commercial use of the Court of the Gentiles was a practice of long standing, there is actually no evidence that traffic in ritually pure items took place in the Temple prior to A.D. 30. V. Eppstein has argued that the sale of animals in the Temple forecourt was an innovation of recent date, introduced by Caiaphas, who wished to set up a market which would be in punitive competition with the traditional markets on the Mount of Olives. . . . Jesus’ action expressed his deep indignation at the flagrant violation of the divinely announced purpose for the Temple” (William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, NICNT, 403-404).

v. 15 **moneychangers** “Moneychangers sat at tables stacked with coins. Many of the worshippers did not have the Hebrew half shekel coins required for payment of the Temple taxes and so they had to exchange their Roman coins for the proper Hebrew coins. Start-

ing on their twentieth birthday, every male Jew was required to pay a yearly half shekel towards the cost of the religious services in the Temple. Because foreign coins had idolatrous images engraved on them, they were not an acceptable means of payment. Charging a fee that was sometimes as high as ten percent, the money changers exchanged the Greek and Roman coins most people had for the required Hebrew coins” (Richard C. Blight, *An Exegetical Summary of Mark 9–16*, 149).

v. 17 **nations** “Popular messianic hopes and expectations looked for the Messiah to rid Jerusalem and the temple of the gentiles (esp. the Romans), but Jesus’s action criticizes the Jewish leadership for hindering the gentiles’ access in the temple. It was God’s purpose for gentiles to occupy (in worship, of course) the temple (cf. Isa. 2:2–4; 66:18–24). Jesus’s criticism falls not on the ‘cursed’ gentiles but on the leadership of Israel for demeaning their rightful place in the temple . . . For both Jews and gentiles, the temple was intended by God as a sacred place for prayer and worship, and the commercialism of the temple hindered this greatly” (Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BECNT, 517-518).

v. 18 **chief priests** “They realized that Jesus was threatening the status quo, with regard to the status both of the temple and of the Torah, and therefore they *began looking for a way to kill him*, as had been the case earlier in Galilee when some Pharisees and the Herodians plotted Jesus’ death (3:6)” (Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC, 274).

v. 23 **mountain** “In contrast to Jewish expectation that at the Last Day ‘the mountain of the house of the Lord’ would be exalted and ‘established as the highest of the mountains’ (Mic. 4:1), Jesus now pronounces judgment on it and declares that it will be submerged in the sea” (Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*, BNTC, 269). Others have suggested “mountain” may refer to the Mount of Olives or the Herodium, a mountain palace constructed by Herod the Great.

v. 24 **prayer** “In 11:17 Jesus announces the coming destruction of the temple because what was designed by God to be a ‘house of prayer for all the Gentiles’ (Isa 56:7) had become a ‘cave of robbers’ (Jer 7:11). In other words, the exposition of prayer in vv 22–24 picks up and offers the background to Jesus’ reference to prayer in 11:17. The temple was no longer the place of prayer as an expression of faith in God (cf. 12:40). The Temple Mount may as well be hurled into the sea. Second, God’s redemptive will and work are to be seen in Jesus and his ministry, which calls one to faith in God (11:20–22), a relationship that in turn is expressed in prayer” (Evans, 195).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Put your trust in God and not in power structures that often deny him. Pray persistently and live expectantly with a forgiving heart to see the world change.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

What right this moment makes you angry? Is it your kids not putting their dirty clothes in the hamper, or their missed homework assignments? Maybe it's that you were supposed to go on a trip, but it had to be canceled? It seems that our world easily provides things that will create anger in us. Asking this question of myself brought about a whole list of things that make me angry much quicker than I would like to admit. A lot of times we don't want to talk about what makes us angry because it isn't a very pretty emotion. It is difficult to hide in ourselves and to the world. It feels encompassing. So, the next question is, what do you do with this anger? In Mark 11:15-17 we see Jesus get very angry at the way the temple was being used. His anger ignited him to flip tables and shut down what the people were doing. He did this out of a preservation of holiness, not because he had lost control of himself. Do you know the difference of this in yourself? Think about the things that make you angry, that cause you to lose yourself in the anger. Would it make Jesus angry? Should you be flipping tables to preserve holiness in and around yourself or is it something you need to surrender to the Lord? Take time this week to ask the Lord what things you should be fighting against and what things you need to let go of so it doesn't take up anymore of your time.

***This week's edition of Family Talk is written by Madison Houston, Children's Ministry Associate.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Mark 11:12-25.

1. What made Jesus so upset in verse 15?
2. Why did this make him so angry? (v. 17)
3. Why did the priests and teachers fear Jesus? (v. 18)

What Do You Think?

What does this story teach you about the temple?

What Do You Do?

Focus on the importance of prayer this week by creating a prayer journal. Everyday write two prayers in your journal. Bring your completed journal to the KidPix store to receive 2 extra tokens.

CORE COMPETENCY: Worship

I celebrate God for who he is and what he has done for me.

MEMORY VERSE: 1 Corinthians 3:16

"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?"

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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BIBLE CHURCH**

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