

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Paul Gunn, Pastor

Sermon title: Jesus' Violent Actions, Mark 11:12-25

Date preached: October 9, 2016

For public use: See non-copyright comments at the end of the message

INTRODUCTION: We don't think of Jesus as being violent, but here are five situations we should examine.

- 1. Question:** Why didn't Jesus make the tree bear fruit? He could have done that.
- 2. Question:** Why did Jesus wreck the furniture in the temple? Couldn't he have just done this peacefully?
- 3. Question:** Why didn't the religious people agree with Jesus? Why did they want to kill him?
- 4. Question:** Has anyone ever successfully prayed for a mountain to be moved into the sea?
- 5. Question:** Why did Jesus have to throw the forgiveness thing in there?

SCRIPTURE: Mark 11:12-14 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.*

First, Question: WHY DIDN'T JESUS MAKE THE TREE BEAR FRUIT? HE COULD HAVE DONE THAT.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 11:15-17 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.'"*

Second, Question: WHY DID JESUS WRECK THE FURNITURE IN THE TEMPLE? COULDN'T HE HAVE JUST DONE THIS PEACEFULLY?

SCRIPTURE: Mark 11:18 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.*

Third, Question: WHY DIDN'T THE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE AGREE WITH JESUS? WHY DID THEY WANT TO KILL HIM?

SCRIPTURE: Mark 11:19-25 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."*

Fourth, Question: HAS ANYONE EVER SUCCESSFULLY PRAYED FOR A MOUNTAIN TO BE MOVED INTO THE SEA?

Fifth, Question: WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO THROW THE FORGIVENESS THING IN THERE?

So, I've outlined the five questions I want to answer this morning.

In this passage of Scripture, we first have the fig tree. Jesus cursed the fig tree for not having figs even though the Scripture says it was not the season for figs.

The Question remains, WHY DIDN'T JESUS MAKE THE TREE BEAR FRUIT? IF JESUS HAD THE POWER TO CURSE IT, WHY DIDN'T HE USE THAT POWER TO MAKE IT FRUITFUL OUT OF SEASON?

The answer is found in the fact that Jesus was teaching a lesson to his disciples. In the Old Testament the nation of Israel was compared to a fig tree several times.

SCRIPTURE: Jeremiah 8:12-13 *"Were they ashamed because of the abomination they had done? They certainly were not ashamed, And they did not know how to blush; Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; At the time of their punishment they shall be brought down," Says the LORD. ¹³"I will surely snatch them away," declares the LORD; "There will be no grapes on the vine And no figs on the fig tree, And the leaf will wither; And what I have given them will pass away.""*

So here, Jesus compares the nation of Israel to a fig tree.

In Jeremiah 29, God compares his people who have ignored him to figs that are so bad they cannot be eaten.

Then we read in an excerpt from Hosea chapter 9, God said in verse 10: *"When I found Israel, it was like finding grapes in the desert; when I saw your ancestors, it was like seeing the early fruit on the fig tree."*

EXPLANATION: With cursing the fig tree because it did not have fruit, Jesus illustrated his teaching that Israel should be bearing fruit. But, as a nation, they bore no fruit; they only had leaves. And if all the disciples did not get what Jesus was saying, then they certainly should have gotten the personal principal that it is important for disciples to continually bear fruit.

When I think of fruit trees, I think of seasons. I am not aware of a tree which keeps on giving fruit forever, but then again, I don't know much about fruit trees. Fruit trees go through seasons especially in our part of the country. And the conditions must be right for the harvest season to be its best.

APPLICATION: As I think about the illustration of Jesus cursing the fig tree because it had no fruit, I see something here: Jesus wants us to bear fruit all the time, whether in season or not. Now what does this mean? Let's consider when we are "in season" as believers. "In season" probably includes time when we've had a private devotion time, when we are at church, and when we have specific times of gratitude. Maybe we've been to a prayer meeting, or we've discussed the Bible. It's times like this when we are "in season". While "in season," our spiritual fruit should be ripe for picking. Jesus didn't force the tree to have fruit out of season any more than he forces us to have fruit out of season.

But, what about those times when we are “out of season”? What about the day that starts off terribly and keeps getting worse? What about when we hear bad news? When we hear and see the worst? What about when someone wrongs us? During those times, we may very well be out of season.

The apostle Paul told Timothy in Second Timothy 4:2 “*Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.*”

This word “prepared” comes from the Greek word (ef-is'-tay-mee) which also urgent, instant...and even better, “I stand by” or “I am urgent.”

I Thessalonians 5:16-18 *Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

Folks, we must live with an ongoing state of the presence of “Christ-mindedness.”

Now this leads me to the next part of the message. If we are “Christ-minded” all the time, doesn’t that mean we would be N-I-C-E to everyone? Doesn’t it mean we would smile and pat everyone on the back no matter what?

No. Because after Jesus cursed the fig tree, he went into the temple and destroyed it.

Let’s go back to the second Question: WHY DID JESUS WRECK THE FURNITURE IN THE TEMPLE? COULDN’T HE HAVE JUST SPOKEN PEACEFULLY TO THOSE HE DISAGREED WITH?

Where did we ever get this image of the little wimpy Jesus going around being nice all the time? The very idea of Jesus violently walking into the temple like Bufford Pusser and knocking over tables and running over people is enough to completely destroy some people’s perception of Jesus.

What was going on here? The city was packed with Jews coming for the Passover celebration. At this time, the Jews were under Roman rule, and they did not have their own money. They disliked using Roman money, so in the temple, they had money changers changing money for coins minted in the distant city of Tyre.

The temple had a Court of the Gentiles...a place where Gentiles could go, but instead of finding a place of reverence, they found a flea market, money changers, souvenirs, trinkets, and doves for sacrifices. Imagine your indignation if you were saved here and baptized here but went away for a few years and came back to this sanctuary flea market? In Jesus' day, doves were one of the animals used in sacrifices for the forgiveness of sin; even poor people could afford them. The truth behind the sacrificial system was God's grace would abound, and a person's sins would be transferred to the animal as the animal would die in place of the person. Over time, the truth behind it was ignored and forgotten, and now along with trinkets and money exchange, you could buy a dove and have your sins forgiven.

Furthermore, Jesus viewed the temple as primarily a place of prayer for people of all nations! Look in Mark 11, verse 17. Jesus was referring to Isaiah 56. On this day, however, the temple was a place to make money. **No wonder Jesus was mad!**

And, here's the answer to the third Question: WHY DIDN'T THE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE AGREE WITH JESUS? WHY DID THEY WANT TO KILL HIM?

He was a threat to their tainted income. Well, when you get economy involved, people get upset. Jesus destroyed something on the outside—the fig tree—pointing out its lack of fruit, and now he destroyed something on the inside...inside the temple.

The reason the nation of Israel bore no fruit like the fig tree bore no fruit is because they perverted the worship of the one true, living God. The corruption on the inside corrupted the outside. Hmm... Is this same for us? Is this the same for our families? Is this the same for our nation?

[TRANSITION] Next in the narrative, Jesus and his disciples leave. Peter noticed the withered tree and pointed it out to Jesus. In response Jesus called his disciples to have faith.

Now what about the fourth Question: HAS ANYONE EVER SUCCESSFULLY PRAYED FOR A MOUNTAIN TO BE MOVED INTO THE SEA?

Not that I am aware of. The mountain represented an obstacle. A lot of people isolate this one teaching about prayer and say if a person prays for something, and it doesn't happen, then the person doesn't have enough faith.

Jesus taught numerous lessons on prayer, and there are other Scriptures as well, which must be included in any teaching on prayer. For prayer to be answered, it must be within the will of God. Prayer is not just a 911 call to God, but it is an ongoing communion with him.

Believing God will answer your prayers, regardless what you ask for and only if you have enough faith, is rather selfish praying. I appreciate how one Christian writer pointed out when Jesus prayed, he said, "Our father..." not "My father."

I led a study on prayer, and we looked at prayers of the Bible and Jesus' teaching on prayer. Prayer is very simple in one way, yet the older I get, the more I see more mystery around prayer.

When Jesus referenced the mountain being moved, he meant for them to pray in faith. Do you pray in faith? Praying to know the will of God is praying in faith. It's much easier to pray prayers without faith in them. It's much easier to say the same rote prayers over and over and never be moved to pray in faith.

When Peter pointed out the withered tree to Jesus, the one he'd cursed the day before, Jesus responded to pray in faith. The tree was cursed because it had no fruit. The first fruit of the believer is faith! Do you see this? Faith.

And, here's my last Question: WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO THROW THE FORGIVENESS THING IN THERE?

He did this because forgiving others is an indicator of a pure heart. You see, we shouldn't forgive others just so God will answer our prayers; we should forgive others because of what Christ has done in our lives and because we want to extend that grace to others. When we forgive, the walls of separation between us and people go away...the walls between us and God go away.

Jesus threw the faith thing in there because it is impossible to pray a prayer of faith without forgiving others. If you pray and are holding bitterness in your heart and refuse to forgive someone else, you are doing nothing except just speaking words. Faith and forgiveness are essential to praying effective prayers.

- Without faith and forgiveness, our prayers have about as much spiritual value as the doves sold at the flea market inside the temple.
- Prayers without faith and without our forgiving of others deserve nothing more than what happened to the fig tree and the money changers.
- Prayers without faith and uttered by someone who refuses to forgive aren't really prayers to God; they are nothing more than false security.

Forgiveness is not on the list of favorite topics of discussion for most people, is it? Once you forgive, you'll feel so released you won't believe you are the same person. That's why Jesus threw the forgiveness thing in there.

There you have it; the lesson of the fig tree— and Jesus and the destroying of the temple.

To preachers, teachers, students, and anyone else reading or using this message: I have posted this for all to use as you see fit. There is no need to cite me as the source. You are free to delete sections, add your own, or do whatever you want. There is no copyright. My request is that you do not copyright or sell my work. I am sharing my preaching notes in good faith with you because I know the challenges of putting together a lesson, especially when your week gets consumed with other things. Use it and enjoy!

I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

Find me at www.thbc.com Click on sermons or YouTube channel: Pastor Paul Gunn
Thanks to Judy Andrews and Nancy Claire Smith for their editing assistance.

Sincerely, Paul Gunn
Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Nashville, Tennessee
USA