**Calvary Fellowship 12.11.2022 Matthew 21:1-22 “We've Been Expecting You”**

* **Years ago I decided to do something nice for Carey – she was working & I had the day off -So I called my mom & asked her how to make black beans**
* I decided I was going to make Carey my favorite meal for dinner
* So my mom told me all the ingredients – she explained the inner workings of “Sofrito”, how long to keep the beans in the pressure cooker, and all the rest
* So she got done telling me how to make it & then she said, “Robertico, all you writing this down?” I said, “Don’t worry. I’ve got it memorized.”
* So I make some rockin’ sofrito, soaked the beans & put them in the pressure cooker - Then I sat down to watch a movie
* I could hear that “Siiit, siit, siiit” noise that the pressure cooker makes when it’s doing its’ job - Then the sound stopped
* About an hour later, I heard, “Boom” & the most hideous smell I’ve ever smelled
* I went in & the pressure cooker had exploded – the lid was off & there was beans everywhere – on the walls, on the floor – even behind the fridge
* So I called Carey & told her what I had happened – what I didn’t know is that Carey had me on speaker phone & the entire office heard about my accident
* **I’m guessing you’ve had a moment in your life when things didn’t work out the way U expected them to**
* B/c as much as we might try not to, we all have expectations
* We have expectations of situations, of people, of the future, & if we’re honest, we have certain expectations of God
* This is at the heart of what I want to spend our time talking about today
* B/c the ancient Jews living in the time of Jesus had expectations as well
* They expected the Messiah to be a military leader - they expected the Messiah to mount up a resistance against Rome & overthrow their occupation of Israel
* And Jesus showed up & while He did things that were certainly miraculous & impressive, He didn’t want to use force to usher in the Kingdom of Israel
* Instead, He talked about the kingdom of God - a kingdom that is here, but not totally here - an invisible kingdom that will become visible
* Jesus taught that the kingdom of God is anywhere God is reigning as king
* **And here’s what I love about the chapter we’re about the enter into**
* Throughout the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus has been healing people, feeding people, helping people, & loving people - but telling everyone to keep silent about the fact that He is the Messiah
* But today is different - today He’s sending out notices ahead that the Messiah is here & today’s the day for His people to recognize Him
* Today, we’re going to see a different Messiah than Israel expected, but it’s the Messiah they needed & that we need
* And here’s what I believe to be a powerful lesson for us today - sometimes God gives us what we need over what we want & it takes maturity to see that God is seeking to disappoint us - instead, He’s really trying to bless us
* That’s what He’s trying to get the ancient Jews to see & we will be much happier than joyous people if we can see God doing it in our lives…

**———(v. 1-11)———**

**#1 - Jesus is Revealing His Authority**

* **This is called “The Triumphal Entry” - why is this so important?**
* B/c this is the day Jesus is presenting Himself to Israel as the Messiah
* Everyone who saw Jesus work & heard Jesus teach thought that He might be the Messiah, but today is the day Jesus is revealing Himself
* **But why today? B/c this day was been in the making for almost 500 yrs**
* When Israel was taken captive by Babylonians & God said it’d be for 70 yrs
* After the 70 years were up, Daniel prays, asking God for what’s next
* An angel shows up & blows him away, not by answering his question, but by revealing something even bigger to Daniel...
* “Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.” (Daniel 9:24)
* **God wants to show Daniel the big picture of how He is going to rescue all of humanity, not just the Jewish people**
* This starts w/ understanding a Hebrew word - we have words in English that describe a sum of numbers - like a dozen means 12 or a decade means 10
* Hebrew does something similar: 7 years is called a week, or a “Shabua”
* This idea was built into Israel’s culture - things operated on 7 year cycles
* After 7 of these 7 year periods (49 years), on the 50th year, there was what we called “The Jubilee year” - everyone got the year off & all debts were cancelled
* Land that was sold went back to its original owner so that what God has given to each of Israel’s tribe stayed intact
* Imagine your mortgage Co. calling & saying, “We’ve entered the Jubilee year, so the debt is paid. Don’t send any more mortgage payments.”
* U wouldn’t need Dave Ramsey’s help to pay off Amex, Jubilee would do all of it
* Well, the other thing is that every 7th year, they were supposed to give the land a Sabbath year - just like how the Jews took every 7th day off & 7th year off
* They were to do the same for the land - except they never took the 7th year off & they didn’t give the land it’s rest either
* So when they went into captivity, God said, “U owe the land 70 years, so that’s how long the captivity is going to be.”
* “He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his successors until the kingdom of Persia came to power. The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah.” (2 Chronicles 36:20-21)
* Well, Gabriel says God’s timeframe for His people = Jews, & His city, Jerusalem involves 70 7 yr. periods – let’s make it easy: 7X70 = 490 yrs
* W/in these 490 yrs, God plan of redemption is going to happen
* Do U remember word problems in math? Joe is 2 yrs older than Carmensita & she is ½ the age of mom. How old is her dad?
* **It’s kind of like that: the command to restore & rebuild Jerusalem – refers to Nehemiah who went to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem**
* We know when it happened b/c it’s recorded history – King Artexerxes gave Nehemiah permission to rebuild walls on March 14th, 445 B.C.
* This is when clock starts & it ticks for 7 wks (49) & 62 (434) wks, or 483 yrs.
* **Let’s be more precise & count by days: 483 yrs X 360 days per yr b/c Jews count by lunar 360 day calendar = 173,880 days**
* Why is this important? B/c angel says from the day the order is given to build Jerusalem until Messiah comes is 173,880 days
* **Which brings us to April 6, 32A.D. What happened on that day?**
* Jesus coming into Jerusalem proclaiming Himself to be Messiah
* After all the times Jesus said to tell no 1 - even when the people were ready to make Jesus king & He slipped out - today is the day
* **On this day, people laid palm branches as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on donkey & they quoted Ps. 118 & Jesus accepted it**
* Ps. 118 is a Messianic Psalm - they were to sing it when Messiah comes
* “This is the day that the Lord has made; I will rejoice and be glad in it.” (Psalm 118:24)
* We use it to say every day is a gift from God, but it’s not the point
* It refers to the day Messiah comes - that’s when we are to rejoice
* Then we’re told that the Messiah will be put to death - but not for Himself
* Then why? For us - He’s dying for the sins of others
* At this point, the clock stops - b/c 69 of the 70 weeks have been fulfilled
* This clock is like a stop watch - once it starts again, it triggers the last week & we’ll talk about that final 7 years when we get to Matthew 24-25
* **But here’s the thing I want us to notice in this section - God’s timing has not been moved - He’s working exactly on His schedule**
* And sometimes, b/c we have expectations or demands or deadlines - we think that God has forgotten us b/c He’s not working on our timetable
* Listen, b/c this is a big lesson in spiritual life - God isn’t working on your timetable - He’s working on His own - and mature people don’t demand God to get on their timetable - they decide to get on his clock
* This is why He is unmoved by our demands - It’s not lack of care - it’s our own lack of understanding
* **In all my years in ministry & working w/ people I have found that most of the bad decisions we make comes from a lack of patience**
* Impatience is the thing that kills the good that God wants to do in our lives
* **We operate w/ 2 possibilities in our hearts - 1) that God is totally in control & the good He is seeking to do is coming if we trust Him**
* Or 2) that God is holding out on us or forgotten us & we need to take matters into our hands & try to make it happen
* We have to understand that we never experience the blessing of God by violating the principles of God
* **Singles end up marrying people they regret later** – why? B/c they couldn’t accept the fact that God has His own timeframe
* We think God’s clock must be running slow, so we take matters into our own hands & pay a high price later
* **It’s why students & adults alike have sex before they’re married & end up w/ regrets they wish they could erase**
* It’s b/c we believe God’s clock must not work - & ours does
* Later on we look back & we’ve hurt ourselves due to lack of patience
* “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.” (Galatians 4:4)
* Listen, U are more loved by God that U have the ability to comprehend
* And He loves U so much, He’s willing to be misunderstood by U for a little while b/c U didn’t understand what He was doing in this season of life

**———(v. 12-17)———**

**#2 - Jesus is Using His Authority**

* **When U read the other Gospels, we learn that this scene happens the following day after the Triumphal entry - so it’s Monday of Passover week**
* I love showing people this passage whenever they say, “What would Jesus Do?” - I’m like, “Sometimes He’ flip over tables & whip people”
* But here’s the challenge - Jesus is angry & we don’t want to think about Jesus as angry - we want to think about Jesus as someone who wouldn’t hurt a fly
* The problem isn’t getting angry - the issue is, what are we going to do w/ our anger & how is that anger going to more us to act
* B/c there are situations where, if we aren’t angered by them, something is wrong - human trafficking should make U angry - Children being exploited should make U angry - Satan destroying marriages & families should make us angry - but that anger doesn’t prompt us to sin, it moves us to serve
* “Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.” (Ephesians 4:26-27 NKJV)
* The problem is, we usually get angry over trivial things & then turn a bland eye to the things that should really move us emotionally
* **But don’t get angry at work & take it out on your family**
* If you’re going to get angry, let it propel U to do the right thing & deal w/ the person or the situation who made U angry
* But don’t let your bad day become your family’s bad night
* Don’t make your kids the pay the price b/c someone else made U angry
* Instead, channel your anger & let it prompt U to do good
* **OK, let’s analyze this scene so we can understand why Jesus is angry**
* Remember, it’s Passover in Israel - this is a huge celebration where Jews celebrated God freeing them from the bondage of slavery in Egypt
* Every Jew was required to appear at the Temple during Passover
* This means during Passover week, there would be close to a million people coming in & out of the Temple
* U didn’t come empty handed - U had to bring a sacrifice to be offered on behalf of your family, but many people were traveling from distant lands
* This means they weren’t going to travel w/ a bunch of animals
* And they were coming to Jerusalem w/ foreign currency from their homelands
* The religious leaders cooked up a scheme that was making them very wealthy
* Someone would show up w/ an animal & the leaders would say, “I’m sorry. This animal isn’t Temple approved. You’ll need to trade it in for an approved lamb.”
* And they would charge ridiculous prices b/c they had a corner on the market & there was nowhere else to go
* If you’ve ever bought lunch at Disney World, U know exactly how they feel
* Who prices this stuff? - A burger & fries; that’s worth $45, right?
* That’s why I don’t know why they even bother having a Dumbo ride - we’re the Dumbo & we’re being taken for a ride
* But they were even doing this to the poorest of people - that’s why Jesus specifically goes after the money changers & those who sold doves
* If U aren’t aware, doves were only offered by the poorest of the poor
* “But if you cannot afford to bring a sheep, you may bring to the LORD two turtledoves or two young pigeons as the penalty for your sin.” (Leviticus 5:7)
* So they were even exploiting the poorest people in Israel who sacrificially trying to obey God & make an offering, but we’re being grossly overcharged
* **There were also money changers - who were these guys?**
* Money has an image on it - American currency has images of former presidents
* Ancient currency was no different - Roman currency had an image of whatever Caesar was in power at the time
* Jews & converts to Judaism who lived in other parts of the known world would travel to Israel for Passover & all they had was Roman currency
* The leaders said, “I’m sorry, your currency isn’t Kosher. If U want a Temple certified lamb, you’ll need to exchange your secular coin for Temple Shekel.”
* To make matters worse, the exchange rate was highway robbery
* **About 9 months ago, Carey & I got a coupon in the mail for a restaurant & we decided to go there for dinner**
* We hadn’t been there in a while, so we were excited to go back
* We get to the end of our meal, I was looking for our server b/c I wanted a refill on my Coke & Carey jumps out of her chair hits the table w/ her napkin & then sits down - I say, “Are U ok?”
* She opens the napkin & says, “There was a roach on the table.”
* So I say, “Give me the napkin.” - I call the server over & hand him the napkin & tell him to bring the manager over
* The manager comes over & apologizes & then says the words that U never want to hear as a customer, “I know it’s a problem.”
* So basically he was saying, “I know we have a roach problem in our restaurant, but we haven’t fixed it yet.”
* So bad news - there was a roach on our table/ good news - the meal was free
* But what if my wife had started flipping over tables & whipping the employees & started calling out orders for them to start cleaning, spraying, & sanitizing?
* Let’s be honest, that would an amazing thing to behold… if U don’t work there
* They would ask her, “Who are U to tell us what to do? U don’t work here.”
* **I want U to notice that the religious leaders who get whipped don’t ask Jesus that - they don’t say, “U have no right to do this?”**
* They had no argument for what they were doing - then again it’s probably hard to get in a word when the Messiah has gone full Indiana Jones & is whipping people out of the temple…

**———(v. 18-22)———**

**#3 - Jesus is Challenging His Disciples**

* **This story is very troubling to a lot of people for a few reasons:**
* At 1st reading, it seems like Jesus is hungry & then just flies off the handle & curses the fig tree for not having fruit on it - what if someone plucked them all right before He got there?
* 2nd, we learn in Mark’s Gospel that it wasn’t fig season yet - so how could the fig have fruit when it’s not even fig season (which is summer by the way)
* “And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs.” (Mark 11:13 NKJV)
* 3rd, if Jesus really wanted a fig, couldn’t He just have made the fig tree produce fruit like He multiplied loaves & fish?
* **This passage really troubled me as a young Christian b/c it seems like Jesus is overreacting - until I really understood what was happening**
* 1 of the things that the Gospel writers do is have 2 similar stories & then they put a story in the middle to illustrate the story before it & after it
* Technically, theologians call this a Matthean Interpolation - or as people like me call it, “A Matthew sandwich”
* Here’s the point - Matthew is putting the story of the fig tree in between a story about the rot going on in the temple & the parable we’ll look at next week about a son who looks obedient, but is ultimately going to disobey his father’s wishes
* **The fig tree is going to show us what all this means in a picture - How?**
* B/c the fig tree was had great significance in the Jewish mind
* The fig tree was a symbol of peace, prosperity & the Messianic Age
* “During Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, each man under his own vine and fig tree.” (1 Kings 4:25)
* This is a prophecy that refers to when the Messiah comes that there will be peace & prosperity, like in the days of Solomon
* “Now look at the jewel I have set before Joshua, a single stone with seven facets.I will engrave an inscription on it, says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, and I will remove the sins of this land in a single day. 'In that day each of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and fig tree,' declares the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 3:9-10)
* **So what’s happening here w/ Jesus cursing the fig tree?**
* Jesus is hungry, He walks over the fig tree & there aren’t any figs
* And even though it wasn’t fig season, there are types of fig trees that produce figs at different times of year- but 1 thing is common w/ all of them
* Fig trees usually produce figs before they produce leaves - so to see a fig tree full of leaves means this thing should be ripe w/ figs
* Yet it was barren - no figs - so Jesus uses this as an object lesson for Israel that they repent of their hypocrisy
* The fig tree was a national symbol for Israel & this served as an illustration that Israel had the outward display of religion, but no real fruit
* “A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce good fruit. So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire.” (Matt. 7:17-19)
* Jesus is saying that U can’t fake being something forever
* The true U will always come out whether that’s good or bad
* And Jesus is giving His disciples an object lesson like you’d read from an OT prophet & He reveals what was happening to Israel
* They had leaves - all the looks of spirituality, but none of the fruit
* **So I want to share 1 more thing before we close about the cursing of the fig tree & how it relates to our expectations of God**
* Jesus curses the fig tree in front of the disciples, but here’s the weird thing
* Jesus said that & nothing happened - The tree was still standing - it looked the same as before as if nothing had happened
* But the next day when they returned to that fig tree, it was completely withered
* Here’s the point - maybe there’s a promise of God that hasn’t come to pass yet
* Maybe there’s. Thing that you’ve been praying about & God has told U He’s going to answer - or maybe you’re waiting for an answer still
* Just b/c it hasn’t happened yet, doesn’t mean it isn’t going to happen - It simply means we haven’t given it enough time
* But if U will keep pressing in & trusting in what God has told U to do, you’ll see the breakthrough if we don’t give up
* That’s why, when Jesus gives the disciples the lesson of the fig tree, He doesn’t talk about Israel & the nation walking away from God
* Instead, He makes it very personal to the disciples & says, “If you’ll trust Me, you’ll see lots of amazing things. But you’ve got to trust Me.”
* So as your older brother in the Lord, can I tell U, as someone who has walked w/ God for 30 years - if you’ll trust Him, you’ll watch Him do amazing things & your life will never be the same…