

Mark 11:11-25

Introduction

Symbolic action: a man in Poland lights himself on fire as a symbol of communist oppression

Jesus' symbolic action: turning over the temple tables and then cursing the fig tree

The Passage

I. The connection between the temple incident and the fig tree

A. Notice how the fig tree story "brackets" the incident in the temple

B. The incident with the fig tree explains the significance of Jesus' action in the temple: like the fig tree that is bearing no fruit, the temple system is bearing no fruit to God

C. Fig trees in Israel's history: see Jeremiah 8:4-13

II. The Court of the Gentiles at the Temple

A. God's desire for the Gentiles to be able to draw near to God

See I Kings 8:41-43

See Isaiah 56:6-7: "a house of prayer for all nations"

B. Israel's leadership had turned the court of the Gentiles into a place of money changing, and economic oppression that actually hindered the Gentiles from drawing near to God.

See Jeremiah 7:1-11: "a den of robbers"

III. A blessing to the nations

A. God's desire for Israel was that they would be a blessing to the nations and draw the nations to God, but the temple system and their whole understanding of their identity was actually hindering the nations from coming to God

B. How are we helping people draw near to God and how are we hindering them?

Hinder	Help
Judge the world around us not ourselves	Judge ourselves not the world around us
Trust in money and material wealth	Trust in Jesus Christ
Friends with ourselves, isolate from the world	Friends with the world, friends with ourselves
Live like everyone else	Live the new life in Christ (Fruit of Spirit etc..)
Reduce the Gospel to intellectual assent to Four Laws, Message of Salvation etc..	Present the Gospel in the way we live with Christ and the Four Laws, Message of Salvation etc..
???????	???????

C. Illustration: a grandma who, through her life and prayers, never hindered her grandson from coming to God

IV. The children recognize Jesus for who he is

See Matthew 21:12-16

Today, children are doing amazing ministry on the Lord's behalf

V. The Fig Tree as the Key to Interpreting Jesus' Temple Action

- A. Just like the fig tree that was bearing no fruit, the Jews' way of being God's people was bearing absolutely no fruit in the world
- B. Jesus' actions in the temple was a judgment on that whole way of being God's people
- C. What are the ways of being God's people in the world?

1. The Jewish Plan

Ethnic/National Pride – Restore Israel
Power – Get Rid of the Romans
Monetary/Economic Priority – Trust/Love Money
Maintain Purity – Stay Away From the Sinners/Gentiles
Boundaries/Symbols – Circumcision/Sabbath/Food Laws/
God is With Us – Temple

2. The Evangelical America Plan

Ethnic/National Pride – Americana
Power – ABC's
Monetary/Economic Priority – Trust/Love Money
Maintain Purity – Stay Away From the Sinners/Foreigners
Boundaries/Symbols – Church Attendance/Baptism/Speaking in
Tongues/Giving Money
God is With Us – Church Pride

3. Jesus' Vision and Plan

God Loves All People Regardless of Race
Service and Sacrifice, even unto death
Trust in Jesus and Heaven's Treasures
Live Differently and Love the World Around Us
Boundary – Faith Relationship with the LORD Jesus Christ
God is with us - His Personal Holy Spirit Presence

And only one of those plans bears real fruit!

Discussion Questions

- 1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
- 2. In your own words, describe the connection between Jesus' action with the fig tree and his action in the temple. How did your view of Jesus' action in the temple change as a result of Sunday's sermon?

3. As you take a look at the “Help/Hinder” chart, what are you doing (or not doing) that is helping others draw near to God and what are you doing (or not doing) that is hindering them from drawing near to God? What issues would you add to the chart?
4. As you look at your own life, what is something significant someone did at some point in your life that really helped you draw near to God?
5. It was suggested on Sunday that the appropriate Christian posture is “not to judge outsiders, but to judge ourselves.” Reference was made to 1 Corinthians 5:9-12. Read those verses and discuss what our role in judging/discerning is to be in each other’s lives as Christians vs. our role in non-believers’ lives.
6. As you look at the “American Evangelical Plan” for being God’s people, what are the most important issues to address at Grace, in your mind?