

## Matthew 21:17-22

### Faith, Fruit and the Kingdom of God (The King and His Kingdom)

Prayer: **Everything that you did had and still has great significance** – make application to our hearts we pray – much fruit for your pleasure.

**Intro: How many of you remember what your High School – Mascot was: -**

A) On three School Spirit - shout it out - My School - Falcons – Cool – Falcons are cool –

B) Some schools have weird ones - UC Irvine - Anteaters – Cheerleaders

C) Blooming Prairie High School - Blooming Prairie, Minnesota - Awesome Blossoms

1) Camas HS (Camas, Washington); Papermakers

**Food seems to be a popular choice**

A) Ridgefield HS (Ridgefield, WA); Spudgers

B) Frankfort HS (Frankfort, IN); Hot Dogs

1) New Berlin (New Berlin, Illinois); Pretzels

C) **The People of Israel could probably relate**

**In the time of Jesus the national symbol of Israel was the Fig tree!**

A) God thru prophets like Jeremiah, Amos, Ezekiel, Hosea, and Isaiah all liken Israel to the fig tree. ....

B) They all Referred to Israel as the fig tree – that God would look for fruit from it.

C) **Today we see King Jesus** the day after his triumphal entry ..... And Cleansing of the temple

1) that we looked at last week V.17 Jesus left Jerusalem and went to Bethany

D) Spent the night there –

1) IN the morning he is heading back into Jerusalem – when he has this Rare encounter with a fig tree!

18 Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. (God hungry) 19 And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but

leaves, and said to it, “Let no fruit grow on you ever again.” Immediately the fig tree withered away.

20 And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, “How did the fig tree wither away so soon?”

21 So Jesus answered and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done. 22 And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”

**So On the way from Bethany to Jerusalem, on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, Jesus saw a fig tree.**

A) Fig trees were common in Israel. Growing to heights of 25ft and widths of 20ft

B) they covered the countryside.

C) **Because of their abundance, figs were a staple of the Hebrew diet.**

1) Ripe figs/ dried fig cakes -/ Fig cakes – like our Fig Newtons

D) Here, Jesus—hungry for breakfast—saw a fig tree covered with leaves. – Significant

E) Fig trees are unusual in that the appearance of fruit precedes the appearance of leaves.

1) Jesus sees the leaves - assumed, therefore, it must surely contain fruit as well.

**But it didn't: It had leaves—the outward appearance of vitality and health—but no fruit.**

A) It looked like one thing from a distance but when you got up close – The opposite was true.

B) You could say the tree was a Hypocrite – **Appearance of one thing – In reality it was false.**

1) So Jesus Cursed the fig tree!

C) This bothers some people

**Environmentalists say, “How could this be? What kind of person is this Jesus of Nazareth?”**

A) There is a saying – **a Hungry man is an angry man** – (AGREE) is that what is happening here:

B) Is He just venting His anger by cursing this poor, helpless tree?”

C) **Yet if Jesus and the disciples were cold and they used the tree for firewood to warm themselves,**

1)no one would think anything of it.

D)Here, Jesus uses the tree **not to WARM** the hands but to **WARN the hearts** of His disciples.

E) **It would soon be fire wood ANYWAY!** - the tree was already cursed – it wasn't bearing fruit –  
1)it wasn't doing what it was designed to do. –

**I have a problem – environmentalist groups –they miss the big picture –**

A)In the USA - Bald Eagles egg – \$250,000 fine and 2 yrs in prison

B)Please don't misunderstand me – I am not advocating for Killing Bald Eagles – NOPE  
1)They should be protected.

C)But in our country - The unborn eagle has more rights than the unborn baby.  
1)Every year millions of babies aborted – things are messed up in our society

D)Not Right – **Man alone was uniquely created in the image of God**  
1)We forget that all the time

**So Jesus who cares about Men – uses a worthless fig tree to **teach men- that he loved** a lesson about life – about Hypocrisy. – Fruitfulness**

A)Hypocrisy – putting on appearances –

B)**College town** -Parents week – the parents of the students were visiting the campus for the week.

C)The Local bar that was popular among the students –  
1)Put out a sign a couple of days before the parents were to arrive that said-  
**Students – Bring your parents here for lunch next week and we will pretend that we don't know you.**

D)A local church saw that and put out their own Sign – It read:  
**Students bring your parents to church on Sunday and we will pretend that we DO KNOW YOU!!!**

**Hypocrisy – Pretending – playing games – pretending to be something that you are not.**

A)Hypocrisy can have devastating results:

B)Karl Marx the father of communism grew up

in a God fearing Jewish home said

1)it was his **Father's Hypocrisy** that led him to become an atheist and create the communist movement.

**C)Hypocrisy can have some devastating results**

1)and that is what Jesus is dealing with here in this encounter with **the fruitless** fig tree.

D) **Why wasn't there fruit?** Lessons from the Cursing of the Fig tree!

**#1 Practical Lesson**

A)In the original Greek text -Verse 19 says it was a lone fig tree.

B)**This tree bore no fruit because there was no cross-pollination.**

1)It's a matter of biology and a fact of life: A lone fig tree cannot bear fruit.

C)**What is true of the fig tree is true of Believers in Jesus Christ – We need each other - **lasting fruit bearing****

<sup>24</sup> And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, <sup>25</sup> not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching – Hebrews 10:24,25

D)**What day: Closer to Christ's return: **Matthew 24****

1)Rumors of war – crazy Weather patterns/ increased terrorism **Birth pangs – Contractions**

E)More frequent and intense – closer you get

**As we see the day approaching –Stir up one another!**

A)The Christian is like the coal in the fire – Old days – Before propane - people grilled Coal briquettes

B)Stir the Briquettes – they would heat each other up  
1)Take one out and put it by itself – it's fire would go out.

C)WE need each other – we need to stir each other up in the Lord

**When we meet together, a spiritual “cross-pollination” takes place.**

A) There’s a dynamic unlike any other when people come together corporately to praise, pray, and study the Word.

B) Fellowship = sharing in common – So like football fans – Share in common.

1) They get excited – until the game is over – drains

C) **The Church is different** – Fuel each other to take Jesus into the world –

1) We equip each other to be Servants of Jesus in a lost world.

D) The Potential is so much greater for what can happen when we gather here – home groups, etc

E) **Blesses our Father - PSA 133:1 – Behold how good... Unity!**

**This only makes sense, for our God is a Father who loves His family.**

A) When my kids were all at home, I loved it when we had meals together – still do!

B) Kids were young – We didn’t serve Aaron in his room, Amy and Amanda in their rooms,

1) They weren’t eating by themselves because something special happened when we were all together.

C) So, too, our Father desires that His children come together- feeding off of **each other/ Cross-pollination**

1) We stir up / equip/ encourage

D) So first there is the practical lesson – we are not meant to be LONE RANGERS

**#2 Prophetic Lesson – Prophetic Illustration**

A) AS I mentioned before the fig tree was a symbolic picture of Israel -

B) Like the fig tree in this account, Israel had lots of leaves.

C) The nation appeared to be so religious—with temple worship, traditions, and the Torah;

1) with Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees—but Jesus found **no SPIRITUAL fruit in her land.**

D) They would reject Jesus – God’s messiah  
1) 40 yrs later they would be cursed.

**Forty years after the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus the Romans marched into Jerusalem, A.D. 70**

A) The Romans – led by Titus -destroyed the temple, and slaughtered thousands.

B) And the nation of Israel lost her identity  
Scattered for almost two thousand years, the Jews, like the fig tree, shriveled and withered. –

C) Until 1948 when God miraculously revived the nation

1) **Prophetic lesson - Prophetic illustration**

**#3 Personal Lesson**

A) Jesus was hungry – He comes looking for fruit –

B) Personally – Jesus comes to our hearts – looking for fruit!

C) Sign of our own **personal VITALITY** spiritually

1) The question is – will he find **any FRUIT** or does he just find leaves.

D) Does He only find **the outward appearances of fruit?** - Bibles on the coffee table

1) Christian t-shirts in the closet – Bumper stickers on the car – Christian playlist for our music

E) **Weekly Church attendance** – those are all good things but – if no fruit – JUST LEAVES

**Remember what Adam did when he sinned in the Garden: He went and hid –**

A) But first he took some fig leaves to cover their NAKEDNESS

B) Leaves – are a cover-up to what is really going on in the heart!

1) Religious activity and service can be a cover up to a heart that is not right with the Lord

C) Jesus is looking for fruit – What fruit?

**The fruit of His Spirit: (Galatians 5:22, 23);**

A) Fruit of a Christ like Character - **love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control**

**B)the fruit of our lips thanksgiving** (Hebrews 13:15);

1)Not just singing songs – but true heart felt praise – abounding from hearts – so in Love with JESUS

**Bb)John 4 Jesus is seeking worshippers**

**C)the fruit of the gospel** (Colossians 1:6);

1)A transformed life!

**D)and the fruit of righteousness** (James 3:18)

1)LIVING RIGHT – From a heart of Love – heart that wants to please the Father – follow the Word

**E)Honor God! – Because we Love Him – He first loved us!**

**We often translate righteousness into not doing what is wrong – towing the line- THAT IS LEAVES**

A)That is religion –

**B)The fruit of righteousness stems from a heart that wants to do what is RIGHT –**

**1)PLEASE GOD – BECAUSE WE LOVE HIM**

**C)When He comes morning by morning seeking satiation and satisfaction, does He find real fruit?**

**1)OR JUST LEAVES –**

**D)Only you can Answer that – Your heart!!!**

**1)PERSONAL LESSON - Conviction -**

V.18 **“Let no fruit grow on you ever again.”**

Mark 11:13 **“May no man ever eat of your fruit again.**

**If we are not satisfying Jesus intimately and personally, we will not satisfy anyone else through service or ministry.**

**Key to bearing fruit –John 15- abide**

<sup>5</sup>“I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. John 15:5

A)Abide= staying connected to / close to Jesus!  
Feeding off of Him – each day!

**So if we are not bearing fruit – Does that mean we are going to be cursed?**

A)IS Jesus going to curse us?

**B)In reality we are cursed already – at the Fall the whole world came under the Curse**

**1)Adam – toil**

**2)Eve – Pain in child birth – desire to rule over her husband**

**C)But Jesus came to lift the curse!**

**1)HE SAID: I came that YOU might have life and that more abundantly**

**What we experience is the opposite of beauty and the beast-**

**A)In that story the beast was under a curse that could only be lifted if he found someone to love him**

**B)The story of the Bible is the opposite – Jesus loved us – he came to take care of the curse**

**1)But in order for that curse to be lifted in your life you need to receive His love – you need to embrace it**

**C)You need to receive His Love – Follow Him**

**1)When you do that - The Curse in your life is lifted**

**D)When we are not abiding in Christ – not bringing forth fruit – we experience the opposite of abundant life –we fall back under the effects of the curse**

**As followers of Jesus we are no longer cursed**

**A)but we can easily put ourselves back under the effects of the CURSE**

**B)THE EFFECTS ? - The Futility of living for self – SO ABIDE in Him – Cling to him**

**C)Understand that Faith and Fruit are connected in the Kingdom of God!**

**20 And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, “How did the fig tree wither away so soon?”**

**A)How did you do that ? Are we going to be able to do that too? SO COOL**

**B)Curse trees and have them wither. – Wow!!!**

**C)They wanted to know the HOW and not the WHY**

**D)JESUS sees this as an Opportunity to talk about Faith and prayer**

21 So Jesus answered and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, if you **have faith and do not doubt**, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done. 22 And whatever things you ask in prayer, **believing**, you will receive.”

**Believing – HAVE FAITH – don’t doubt**

**I have faith – that is not my struggle –**

**A)and do not doubt. – that is my problem – the doubt.**

**B)My doubt is never that God can’t do something – no way –**

**1)my doubt is that he would want to do that for me.**

**have faith and do not doubt**, - if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done. 22 And whatever things you ask in prayer, **believing**, you will receive.”

**Now The idea of Mountains being thrown into the sea was a Hebrew idiom – not literal**

**A)OT expression – God to Zerubbabel – Move the MT- obstacle taken out of the way**

**B)They were familiar with that idiom - they knew what He meant**

**C)Pray believing – Any obstacle can be removed**

**1)Pray believing – Have faith – don’t doubt – you can do great things!!!!**

**Now Mark in His Gospel – puts it this way: Mark 11:22**

<sup>22</sup> So Jesus answered and said to them, “**Have faith in God.**

**A)Important to note: Have faith in God – not Faith in Faith!**

**B)He is not giving us a blank check – he is giving us an incredible promise - There is a difference**

**See there are those who abuse this text - put the emphasis on faith – have faith in faith.**

**A)their theology is if you have enough faith you can rub the magic lamp and the **God Genie pops out****

**B)Ask whatever you want – he will give it to you  
1)Name it claim it – Blab it grab it theology –**

**C)House in Maui on the beach – It can be yours  
Name it claim it - if you believe**

**1)And usually the stipulation for how much you believe is seen by how much you give..... **100fold****

**D)That is not what Jesus is saying and that is not the GOSPEL.**

**E)Mark Batterson – Americanized the gospel.**

“We have Americanized the gospel or spiritualized the American dream, Christianity has become about consumption. We have an inverted gospel where we are not following Jesus but we have invited Jesus to follow us in pursuing our wants, hopes and dreams.”  
– Mark Batterson – Pastor and NY times best selling author

**You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.  
James 4:3**

**F)That is what Faith in faith produces – Me Centered –THEOLOGY**

**Mark is key: Have faith in God**

**A)Faith = to lean heavily upon - to lean all your weight and trust upon – to cast yourself upon – you are placing all your trust in God**

**B)Faith in God – sees the world – sees our needs – from God’s perspective – not our own**

**C)Faith in God has a God centered World view – not a Me centered world View**

**1)Faith in God says – Not my will but your will be done**

**D)Theme: All in – Fully committed – Fully trusting –**

**1)GOING ALL OUT – FOR JESUS –  
**All in and all out for the All in ALL****

**A century ago, a band of brave souls became known as One Way Missionaries.**

**A)They purchased single tickets to the mission field.**

B) Instead of suitcases, they placed their few belongings into coffins.

1) They knew they'd never return home.

C) As they sailed out of port, they waved good-bye to everyone they loved, everything they knew.

In the Late 1800's A.W. Milne was one of those missionaries.

A) He set sail for the New Hebrides in the South Pacific,

B) knowing full well that the headhunters who lived there had martyred every missionary before him.

C) But Milne did not fear for his life, because he had already died to himself.

1) For 35 years, he lived among that tribe and loved them.

D) When he died, tribe members buried him in the middle of their village and inscribed this epitaph on his tombstone:

“When he came there was no light.  
When he left there was no darkness.”

Now few if any of us will be called to die for our faith in Christ –

A) but all of us are called to die to ourselves in order to live for Christ!

B) FAITH AND FRUIT go hand in hand – in the Kingdom – Faith – causes us to ABIDE

1) ABIDE = FRUIT

C) Abiding IN HIM IS a key to asking:

1) Jesus followed his statement on abiding with this

<sup>7</sup> If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

<sup>8</sup> By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. – John 15:7,8

Abiding is about His Heart – His glory!

If you do the LITTLE THINGS like they are BIG THINGS then God will do the BIG THINGS like they are LITTLE THINGS. – Mark Batterson

So a Life surrendered to God – abiding in God – Faith in God – Pray – whatever obstacle might be in the way can be removed. –

A) It might take time – But there is power in Prayer

B) I know women in this church who prayed for 15 yrs for their Husbands to get saved – or to really get right with the Lord

C) God came through! – I love that – but what I don't like is the 15 year part

1) I don't want God to wait 15 years to answer my prayer – I want him to do it in 15 minutes

D) But Faith in God says – I am going to pray – not going to doubt and I am going to keep praying – believing – Your Will – Your Way – Your Timing

E) Pray until you say – stop or you come through

And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

Galatians 6:9

A) Someone needs to hear that!

B) So the question is this: Jesus comes to you today – your heart – will He find FRUIT?

C) IF NOT – Reason is you are not abiding

1) The reason not abiding is a FAITH ISSUE

D) Don't really believe – abundant life is found in him

E) Don't really believe – He has your best interest at heart – trying to handle it on your own

Connect yourself to him today! – Right now!

<sup>23</sup> Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?”

A) Big question: Who's authority –

B) Answer – this Wednesday – Series of parables

Pray!