

Theme: The fruit of true worship in the New Covenant that God desires is faith, prayer, and forgiveness.

I. Intro - Out of Context Quote

- A. Annapolis Capital called me about VMI, prayer
- B. "Prayer is not important" - I didn't say that in context!
- C. Today's text is usually ripped from its context!

II. The Context: The Fig Tree and the Temple

- A. Mark's "sandwich" tells us how to read the events
 - 1. vv11 - Jesus inspects
 - 2. vv12-14 - Jesus inspects and curses the fig tree
 - 3. vv15-18 - Jesus clears the Temple
 - 4. vv19-25 - The withered fig tree
- B. The key lesson from the fig tree and the Temple

Like the fig tree, the Temple was utterly barren of fruit and Jesus pronounced it to be dead, never to bear the fruit of true worship of God again.

 - 1. The fig tree was guilty of false advertising - it looked healthy and fruitful but it was barren.
 - 2. The Temple was guilty of false advertising - it looked healthy and full of worship but it was barren of the fruit and worship God desired.
- C. What kind of fruit does God desire?
 - 1. If the Temple will be destroyed what will the fruit of true worship look like?
 - 2. What does God want from His people?
 - 3. This is the lesson Jesus teaches the disciples

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... Mark 11:20-22

- 4. This is not a random teaching about faith, prayer, and forgiveness but is rather part of the teaching on the fig tree and the Temple, showing the fruit that God desires.

III. The Fruit of Faith, Prayer, and Forgiveness

- A. The fruit of faith in God

"Have faith in God," Jesus answered. Mark 11:22

 - 1. The fruit God desires begins with faith in Him!

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Hebrews 11:6
 - 2. The worship of Israel trusted in works and ethnic identity rather than faith
 - a. The Pharisees trusted in their works, not God

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰ "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men — robbers, evildoers, adulterers — or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' ¹³ "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' ¹⁴ "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God..." Luke 18:9-14

 - 1. They thought they were justified by what they did - fasting, tithing.

2. They were self-righteous - the opposite of faith.
3. Justification comes from faith in God, not my works.

b. People trusted in their ethnic identity as Jews

And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰ The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. Matthew 3:9-10

1. They thought they were justified by being the children of Abraham's flesh - but this is of no value before God.
2. The ax was laid to the root of that tree - it would never grow again!

3. Faith is trust in God's supernatural power and faithfulness - not my own ability

"Have faith in God," Jesus answered. ²³ "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Mark 11:22-23

- a. Our faith is not in faith - it is in God!
- b. Our faith is not in our ability - it is in the power of God to do the impossible.
- c. Moving mountains - a proverbial saying referring to something impossible
- d. Faith has been a critical issue from the beginning of the Gospel

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" Mark 1:14-15

1. The first words of Jesus in Mark - repent, have faith!

2. This is the essence of what Jesus wants - trust in Him and the Gospel!

- e. We have seen many examples of this type of trust in God in the Gospel of Mark - the paralytic and his friends, the woman with incurable bleeding, Jairus and his daughter, the father of the paralytic boy, and Bartimaeus.
- f. God loves it when His children have trust in His power to intervene on their behalf!
- g. 'This mountain' - probably refers to Mount Zion, the Temple, which rather than furthering the Gospel stands in the way of the Gospel.
- h. Whatever obstacle stands in the way of the progress of the Gospel is removed, not by my power or skill, but by the power, promise, and faithfulness of God!

B. The fruit of prayer to God

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. Mark 11:24

1. When we are justified and brought into a relationship with God by faith we commune with Him through prayer.
2. The Temple was supposed to be a house of prayer - but was barren of real prayer.
3. The Temple had been the place of prayer - how could they pray when it was gone?
And because you love the house of Israel, you promised that if we should have reverses, and tribulation should overtake us, you would listen to our petition when we come to this place and pray. 3 Maccabees 2:10 (written between 30-70 AD)
4. Even those far from the Temple faced toward it to pray - how would they pray when it was gone?

5. In the New Covenant prayer is not diminished but magnified! We no longer need a physical Temple for in Christ we are the Temple! We no longer need a priest to mediate, for in Christ we are priests!
6. We can approach God with confidence, trusting that He gladly hears us and delights to answer the prayers of His children!

C. The fruit of forgiving others

And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. Mark 11:25

1. Jesus then surprisingly turns to forgiveness!
2. Faith and prayer are God-focused - but this is focused on other people!
3. But the Temple sacrifices were meant to be focused on the forgiveness of sins and gratitude for God's mercy and covenant faithfulness.
4. When we are forgiven of sin by God, the natural overflow is forgiving others!

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. Colossians 3:13

- a. This is the same lesson Jesus taught in the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:21-35)
- b. I have been forgiven of our mountain of sins by God - how can I withhold forgiveness for others sins against me?
- c. The focus in the Temple had been on works, and thus it did not lead to an overflow of the forgiveness of the sins of others. But the proper focus is God's mercy, and that must overflow in mercy toward others!

5. Forgiveness and prayer are intimately related
 - a. It is impossible to draw close to God in prayer to receive forgiveness while refusing to forgive others!
 - b. An unforgiving heart becomes hardened toward others and God and can not freely receive forgiveness from God.
 - c. When I refuse to forgive those who have sinned against me my soul becomes increasingly unable to receive forgiveness from God.
 - d. When I look in faith to God, draw near to Him in prayer, and let forgiveness freely flow from God to me and then to others, it is a never-ending cycle of blessing.

IV. Applying the Word

A. Do I see the difference between Law and Gospel?

Law	Gospel
Justification by flesh (ethnicity)	New birth by the Holy Spirit
Human works	Faith in God
Human power	Prayer
Forgive if they earn it	Forgive as I have been forgiven
God dwells in the Temple	God dwells in every believer

1. The Law does not give life, and leads to bondage!
2. The Law is the way of every religion in the world - only Christianity brings the Gospel!
3. If you are trusting in the Law, in your efforts and works, look to Christ today! The Law can never save - and it is exhausting!

4. The Gospel brings life and freedom!

Run and run, the law demands
But gives me neither feet nor hands
Better news, the gospel brings
It bids me fly, it gives me wings

Bearing shame and all my sin
There, in my place, He stood condemned
Here I stand now justified
My guilt is His, His grace is mine

Praise the Lord, oh my soul, praise the Lord
Now and forevermore, my heart confess
"Christ is all my righteousness"
Christ is all my righteousness

My accuser, he may roar
Of countless sins that I have done
These I know and thousands more
Behold, my God, He knows not one

Praise the Lord, oh my soul, praise the Lord
Now and forevermore, my heart confess
"Christ is all my righteousness"
Christ is all my righteousness

5. Believer, beware of the temptation to return to Law!

- a. The Galatians tried to begin with the Gospel, move to Law; to begin with the Spirit but grow by their own power!

The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you."⁹ So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.¹⁰ All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."¹¹ Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith."¹² The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them."¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming

a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."¹⁴ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.
Galatians 3:9-14

- b. Notice the clear distinction between Law and Gospel
 - c. We do not begin with the Gospel and move to Law; we do not begin with the Spirit and then continue in our own power!
6. We live by faith, are nourished in prayer, and are enriched as we freely forgive as we have been forgiven!

B. The Table of the New Covenant

1. This is the Table of the New Covenant - not the Old
2. This is the Table of the Gospel - not the Law!
3. Come, receive grace from Your Father!

Faith, Prayer, and Forgiveness

Mark 11:20-25

July 14, 2024

Communion

Galatians 3:26-29

Teaching keywords: Faith; prayer; forgiveness; Tabernacle and Temple; New Covenant; Law and Gospel

You are all sons and daughters of God through faith in Christ Jesus,²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.²⁹ Since you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3:26-29

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 “I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. 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 him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”

Mark 11:20-25