

Praying Beyond Fig Trees To Mountains

by Carter Conlon

This sermon focuses on the power of faith in God to move mountains in our lives and society. It begins with Jesus cursing a fig tree as a symbol of deceptive satisfaction that hinders us from true worship. The message emphasizes the need to move beyond fig trees to mountains, representing societal challenges that require faith and prayer. The story of Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20 illustrates God's ability to answer big prayers, even reversing time, showing there are no limitations to what God can do. The sermon encourages believers to pray for mountain-moving faith and to trust God for extraordinary breakthroughs in their lives and generation.

Scripture: Mark 11:22, Mark 11:12, 2 Kings 20:1, Joshua 10:12, 2 Timothy 3:16, Romans 8:31, Ephesians 3:20, James 5:16, Matthew 17:20, Romans 12:1

Topics: "Faith that Moves Mountains", "The Power of Prayer"

Description

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Transcript

I want to speak to you this evening, beginning in Mark chapter 11, if you have your Bible or another device, and I'm going to go from there to 2 Kings chapter 19 or 20, 2 Kings 20, starting in Mark 11, and I want to talk to you about praying beyond fig trees to mountains. Praying beyond fig trees to mountains. Mark chapter 11, beginning at verse 22.

So Jesus answered and said to them, have faith in God, for assuredly, that means truly, it means without any doubt, it means take notice, it means like, it's not like God has to say I'm telling you this is true, because He can't lie, but for the sake of emphasis, He says assuredly I tell you, in other words, take note of this. That whoever says to this mountain, be removed and be cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them and you will have them.

Now the story begins with Jesus and His disciples leaving Bethany and going up into Jerusalem. As they're going into Jerusalem, Jesus Christ approaches a fig tree. Now the writer, Mark, who writes this, whether he had a personal encounter or he got the story from somebody else, writes it from his perspective.

It says, and seeing a fig tree afar off, having leaves, he went to it 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. And in response, Jesus said to it, let no one eat fruit from you ever again.

And it speaks on a multiplicity of levels, and I have spoken on some of them here in the past. But one of the levels that it speaks to my heart as I read it again, they're coming from Bethany into Jerusalem. It's assumed, and we know it's true, that they're heading into the temple for the sole purpose of worshiping God.

And the fig tree represents that which stands between where we are, our journey, and when we finally get to the place where, in a sense, God is. We're locked in. We've come there to worship.

We've come there to meet with God. And on the way to church, how many people have been diverted from coming to church from time to time? You've met a fig tree along the way. You know, it's that game that was being on that night, and it was only going to be played, and it was a once a year thing, and you knew you should have been going to the temple to worship God.

But a fig tree, it could be that girl. It could be that guy. It could be that relationship.

It could be...it's a myriad of things. Somebody calls you right as you're about to go to church and says, hey, I bought a new car. Do you want to come over to my house and see it? So all these fig trees, and there's many as probably as you can imagine in your mind that kind of stand between us and where God is, or where the worship of God really is.

And these fig trees offer us satisfaction, but they are barren. Now Jesus is omniscient. It means He's the Son of God.

He knows all things. He knows it's not the season of figs, and He knows, He has to know, that there are no figs on this particular tree. But for the sake of argument, He goes to the tree as almost like an illustration.

And the tree is a deceptive tree. It has an image in a sense of satisfying, but it does not satisfy. Just as our brother shared tonight from Africa when he talked about all the things out there that he was doing that were drawing him away from God that offered satisfaction but produced no satisfaction in them.

And as Christians, we start out, and we're going to encounter a lot of fig trees along the way. These are things that we embraced maybe in our lives that maybe offered us satisfaction of some sort. And maybe we believed it for a season only to get kind of close to it, and once you get close to it, you realize it really doesn't satisfy.

And it could be a myriad. It could be all kinds of things. I know you have things coming in your mind right now that really offered you life.

It could have been education. It could have been, I don't know, it could be anything. But when you get close to it, you find out it's really deceptive.

It's sort of what your life is called to be in God. And Jesus takes authority over this deceptive fig tree. So this is where it all begins.

He says, let no one eat fruit from you ever. So the disciples heard Him take authority over this fig tree. Just as you and I have to do in our own lives.

If there's something maybe that offered you satisfaction and still tempts you again today, as Isaac shared in his song, we have the right to take authority over these things and say, I will not eat fruit. You will not deceive me again. You will not convince me that you're going to satisfy me.

I don't care how glossy you look. I don't care how big your smile is. I don't care how sweet you smile or whatever it is that's offering you satisfaction or how good you taste.

You will not deceive me again. I will not be taken by you again. I'm going to Jerusalem.

I'm going to the temple. I'm going to meet with God, and I'm going to establish or walk in a living relationship with God. So they go into the temple, and Jesus overthrows the temple, the tables, and the money changers and such like, makes a declaration that my house shall be called a house of prayer.

They go back into Bethany. The next morning now, they're heading back into the temple again. And when the evening had come, He went out of the city, and the morning as they passed by, verse 20 of Mark 11, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

And Peter, remembering, said to them, Rabbi, look, the fig tree which you cursed has withered away. And so Peter's excited over this little victory. I mean, it is really a little victory, isn't it? It's one little tree that offered a deceptive fruit.

Jesus takes authority over it. And when you look in the Bible, it's like, Rabbi, capital R, look, exclamation point, Rabbi, look, like, wow, the kingdom of God has come. The fig tree has died, you know what I mean? And we're like that, aren't we, sometimes? We get victory over alcohol, and we say, yes, the fig tree died, I've got the victory.

And immediately, and Jesus doesn't even address the fig tree, which is really interesting. They're all excited about it, but He immediately redirects their focus to the mountain. Isn't it amazing? So He answered and said, so He says, Rabbi, look, the fig tree which you cursed has withered away.

So Jesus then answered and said to them, have faith in God, for assuredly, or truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, be removed and cast into the sea and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them and you will have them. I found myself sitting here tonight during the worship and saying, God, would you give me an anointing of faith again, deeper than I've ever known? In the book of Revelation, there was a church called Laodicea, and they had been more or less waylaid by their own fig trees.

They said, we're rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing, and a society like this can do that to you. You know, compared to the rest of the world, we are rich. We are increased with goods, and there's the people all over the world, if they had what we had tonight, they'd say, I have need of nothing.

And we can forget, though, that the calling on our lives is higher than this, and not just to rejoice over the fig trees that we've gotten the victory over, but there are mountains now in our society. There are mountains that we're facing that can't be moved by human effort, but they can only be moved by faith in the revealed will and the revealed word of God. And I found myself sitting here saying, Lord, if the church of Laodicea needed an eye salve anointing, would you anoint my eyes again? Would you give me the ability to see beyond what I have? I've seen some great things in the past, and thank God for those things.

I've had fig tree victories in my life, and I have seen a few mountains move, but I thank God the need of this hour is so incredibly great. And you don't tease your people. You don't just say these words to fill in a couple of paragraphs in the Bible.

He's not a God who can lie, and He doesn't put something out in front of us that's unattainable. And so when I read the Scriptures of God, this is attainable. There is a kind of prayer, if we have faith in God, that can move mountains.

There's a kind of an intercession at the throne of God, like with Esther when she went before the king that can actually reverse the decree of death and make it into a law of life. There is a power in God. It's all through the Scriptures.

It's there. But God, maybe I'm blind to it. Maybe I can't see it the way I once did, and I can't anoint my own eyes.

I can read the Bible from now until I die of old age, but I can't anoint my own eyes. God has to anoint my eyes. And I was praying tonight, and I said, God, I don't care if you have to make mud with spit again and put it on my eyes as you did the blind man.

I don't care if you've got to speak to me and say, see, I don't care how you do it, but I'm asking you to anoint my eyes, oh God, to be able to see this truth, to be able to realize this truth in my own life. I don't want to just be reading it and preaching it. I want to live this.

We're living in an age with mountains. We have mountains of incredible evil. It's even taking a hold of our children and our schools and our society is turning dark, and the ways of God are in danger of almost being eradicated in this generation.

There is a mountain to be spoken to in this generation. Have faith in God. He said, assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, be removed and be cast into the sea and doesn't doubt in his heart, but believes that the things that he says will happen, he will have whatever he says.

He says, therefore, I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them and you will have them. I don't want to live my life at the fig tree level anymore. I don't want to be, you know, how many Christians here tonight say, I'm just so tired of praying about fig trees in my life.

And that being my only, I got victory over this fig tree and I defeated the deception of that fig tree. And so our whole life is just about ourselves and things that we thought were going to satisfy us and we found out they couldn't and we, we prayed and we, they were defeated. And so we're just like a fig tree testimony in the house of God, but there's so few mountain movers left anymore.

I don't want to just be a fig tree Christian. I want to be a Christian that God can use to move a mountain because mountains need to be moved again in our generation by the power of God. And they can only be

moved by the power of God.

And so Jesus was saying to his own disciples, I want to talk to you, I want you to have faith and I want you to ask for things that are bigger than your own needs. You see, because it was the fig tree represented my needs. They assumed he was hungry.

So it's about me and my needs. And he says, I want to give you a faith that's bigger than just your own needs because the mountain was not about, it's not about me anymore. It's about others that are captivated on this mountain of deception.

And that's what Jerusalem actually was. It was a mountain of religious deception that actually hated God and was about to crucify his son. It was deceiving people into thinking that even religious observance could satisfy when it couldn't or bring the people into eternal life when it wasn't going to.

It was a mountain that needed to be moved and needed to be cast into the sea. And of course in AD 70 it was removed and it was cast into the sea of the nations of this world. And so we ask a question to ourselves, will God answer if I pray really big prayers? You know, a lot of people are afraid to pray big prayers because if they don't get answered, it's almost like, well, I'm going to lose confidence in God.

Or maybe God will find some secret flaw in me and there's a reason why he's not answering my prayer. And so rather than run the risk, we don't step out on that limb because we don't want to be disappointed. We don't want to be let down.

So we just are constantly standing against the things that are trying to deceive us. And we're not praying about the things that are deceiving the whole society around us. It's way bigger than me now.

It's way bigger than you. We're living in an age where this generation is being taken captive by darkness. And these are mountains now that need to be moved and cast into the sea.

In 2 Kings chapter 20, I want to answer the question, what will God do if I pray and can he answer in a really big way? This story answers that question. In those days, Hezekiah was sick and near death, 2 Kings 20 verse 1, and Isaiah the prophet and son of Amoz went to him and said, thus says the Lord, set your house in order for you shall die and not live. Then he turned his face toward the wall and prayed to the Lord saying, remember now, O Lord, I pray how I have walked before you in truth and with a loyal heart and have done which was good in your sight.

And Hezekiah wept bitterly. And it happened before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court that the word of the Lord came to him saying, return and tell Hezekiah, the leader of my people, thus saith the Lord, the God of David, your father, I have heard your prayer. I've seen your tears and surely I will heal you.

On the third day, you'll go up to the house of the Lord and I will add to your days 15 years and I will deliver you in this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. And I will defend this city for my own sake and for the sake of my servant, David. Then Isaiah said, take a lump of figs.

So they took it and laid it on the boil and he recovered. And Hezekiah said to Isaiah, what is the sign that the Lord will heal me and that I shall go up to the house of the Lord on the third day? It's amazing. Like God just said to Hezekiah, I'm going to heal you on the third day.

You're going to be back in the house of the Lord again and I'm going to give you 15 more years and I'm going to give you a victory over your enemies. And if I was God and Hezekiah said to me, what is the sign? I would have said, well, wait three days and you'll have your sign. You'll be in the house of the Lord.

But Isaiah said, this is the sign to you, verse nine from the Lord, that the Lord will do the thing which he has spoken. Shall the shadow go forward 10 degrees or go backward 10 degrees? And Hezekiah answered, it's an easy thing for the shadow to go down 10 degrees. No, but let the shadow go backward 10 degrees.

So Isaiah the prophet cried out to the Lord and he brought the shadow 10 degrees backward by which it had gone down on the sundial of Ahaz. This is an absolute, you see, the point being, you know, when it says in the scripture, second Timothy chapter three, verses 16 and 17, where Paul, the apostle says, all scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction and righteousness. Now, keep in mind when Paul wrote that, there was not much, if any, of the New Testament at this particular point.

So he's actually making reference to much of this you find even in the Old Testament. And so when Hezekiah prayed that prayer and Isaiah came back to him, God answered his prayer and actually what he did 10 degrees backwards is turning time backwards 20 minutes. I want you to think about that for a moment.

God turned time backwards. It's as if right now it's 825 and if I prayed that prayer, it's like suddenly it's 805 and God turned it back. God turned it back everywhere.

He reversed time, which proves that He's the Lord over time. So there's really, bottom line, there's no limitations to God. He can reverse time.

Now, in order to reverse time, He had to suspend the laws of the universe. The whole universe is moving together in an outward fashion like this. You can go to the museum of the Astronomy Museum in New York and you can see a whole thing about this.

The whole universe is moving outward this way. And so in order to reverse time for 20 minutes, He had to actually back it up. He had to suspend the laws of gravity.

If you stop spinning the world for just a fraction of a second, the law of gravity has to be suspended because we would just simply fly off the world and into space. The oceans would overflow their borders, mountains would crumble and fall, there would be all kinds of calamity and catastrophe in the universe. It's not just stopping planet Earth from rotating, He has to stop everything at the same time.

How powerful is God? That's the question. What will God do in response to one man's prayer? You remember the story of Joshua fighting and he was winning a battle and he wanted the battle to be finished and he spoke to the sun and said, stand still and spoke to the moon and said, stay over there and for a full day, the rotation of the earth stopped. For a full day, the laws again of gravity were suspended because somebody prayed and had the courage and faith to believe that God can do exceedingly above all that we ask or are even able to think.

Have faith in God, Jesus said, looking to the mountain. And you know in comparison to what God did for Hezekiah and God did for Joshua, the mountain is actually a small thing, isn't it? In comparison to these, He suspended the movement of the universe. If God can do that, surely He can move the mountains in

our generation.

Surely He can cause our hearts to begin to believe again that He can do exceedingly above and beyond all we can even ask or think. Can we in our time, can you, can I move beyond our fig trees, our small deceptions to mountains, those things that captivate entire societies and whole generations? I say yes, I say yes with all my heart. I say God, I yield my body as a living sacrifice to You.

Use it in whatever way You will, but oh God, move mountains in this generation. Oh God, do what only You can do, turn back, as You can turn the universe back, You can turn back this tide of sin in America, in our generation. You can push this whole agenda into the sea and cause it to dissipate from our borders.

You can send a spiritual awakening into the nation and cause people to go to their knees in their shopping centers and in parks and in their apartment buildings and in churches and everywhere. God Almighty, move this mountain in our generation. That is the cry of my heart, and that has to be the cry of the heart of every person who's listening online tonight, and every person who's in this sanctuary, God, use my life for something bigger than cursing fig trees.

Use my life for something that's going to make a difference in my society, a difference in my neighborhood, a difference in my family, a difference in my church, a difference in my city. Oh God, use my life, and there's no limit by age or gender or ability. I feel like Caleb when he was an old man.

He said, my strength is the same as it's always been, and I've been 40 years in this wilderness traveling around because of unbelief, and I'm done with this. And he goes and he says, give me the mountain with the giants, the sons of Anak. I want that one, the one that they said couldn't be defeated.

Give me that mountain in this generation. Have faith in God for whoever says to this mountain, be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but believes that the things he says will be done, he will have whatsoever he says. Therefore I say to you, whenever you stand praying, believe that you shall receive, and you shall have the things that you ask for.

Do we dare to believe it in our generation? Do we dare to step past the fig tree and look at the mountain? I love that. I love the fact that Jesus was not teasing his disciples. He was speaking a reality.

And when we begin to pray that way, you'd be amazed, even in this room, what can be moved in this generation through your life. You'd be amazed when you begin to pray with faith and God begins to cause you to move in a certain direction, the things of darkness. Don't forget, this is a spiritual war.

We're not fighting against flesh and blood. We're fighting against powers and principalities of darkness. The Bible says that our prayers, we don't war like people war in this world.

We have power to pull down strongholds. We have power to cast down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. We have power with God.

We have power at the throne of God. Let the world laugh all they want because I know one thing, the devils are not laughing. They know this to be true because they've seen this.

They've been around long enough to see what happens when one man or one woman begins to pray and begins to believe in God. It all begins by removing the mountain of sin that's in your own life. Whatever it is that hinders you from becoming the man or woman that God has called you to be.

Whatever it is in your home, whatever it is in your heart, that's your first mountain. That's the first thing you've got to have faith in God and believe that when Jesus Christ died on that cross 2,000 years ago, he took the punishment for your sin upon himself. You have to believe that he took your place on that cross.

Believe that he loves you and wants to call you back to himself and confess him with your mouth as your Lord and Savior. Then the mountain of sin moves away from you and a whole new realm of eternal life and abundant life starts opening up before you and God can now take your life and use your life for his glory. And so I want to pray a prayer tonight and I want to encourage those that are here in the sanctuary to pray with me for the sake of those who are online, that you need to get this mountain of sin out of your life tonight.

And I want to challenge you to pray like you've never prayed before. And you open your heart to God and get this mountain of unbelief out of your heart and out of your life. Now Father, in Jesus' name, I take authority over every hindering spirit that will try to stop any man or woman listening online tonight from opening their heart to the salvation that's freely offered through Jesus Christ.

This is the first mountain I want to pray against tonight. I command this mountain in Jesus' name to be moved and to be cast into the midst of the sea. We command tonight every obstacle to get out of the way of every man or woman, no matter how addicted or depressed they might be, who wants to surrender their life to Jesus Christ.

Satan, we resist you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we command you to open your doors and loose your prisoners. You can't have these people anymore, because we stand believing in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that your power is broken, your deception is broken, your lies are broken, and you must let these people go.

This mountain of people that are going to cast you and all of your wicked works into the midst of the sea. Now those that are listening online, I'm going to ask you to pray with me right now, right from the bottom of your heart. Pray these words, Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for loving me.

Thank you for paying the price for my sin, for dying in my place, that I might be forgiven. I open my heart to you tonight, and I invite you to come into my life, to be my Lord, and my God, and my Savior. I confess you as the Son of God, and my God, from this day forward, I'm going to live for you, and I'm going to believe you, that my life can make a difference, because you told me so, and because your presence is now inside of me.

I believe that I am a child of God. The Holy Spirit will help me, and heaven will be my home, and I believe it with all my heart tonight, in Jesus' name. Now if you just prayed that from your heart tonight online, I want you to do this right away.

Text the word decided to 51,000 on your cell phone, decided to 51,000. Do that as your very first act of faith, having come to Christ. Don't hesitate to do it, just do it.

I decided, that's what you're saying, I decided, and you're telling us. It's important to confess, you're telling somebody at Times Square Church in New York City, I have decided to follow Jesus. I have decided to let God use my life to make a difference in my generation.

I've decided to go with God, wherever that's going to lead me, that's where I'm going to go. So do it now, do it as an act of faith, and let us help you get started in your walk with God. Now prepare for communion.

We're going to celebrate tonight the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross that made a way for your redemption, and made a way for you to be a man or woman of faith so that your life can actually count for great good in your home, your community, at your own table. You watch what God will do, you watch what he'll do for your family. Now that this, your relationship is back together with God, you watch what God will do now.

You watch the mountains that will begin to move, things you thought were impossible. Matter of fact, can I remind you again tonight that he can turn back time, things you thought you lost, he can turn it back again and bring it back to you, relationships, children, just things that you thought could never be restored, maybe your own sanity, whatever, he can turn time back. That's who God is.

He did it for Hezekiah, why would he not do it for you? You watch what God will do. I'm not making an idle promise to you tonight, what I tell you is true. You watch what God will do.

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