

Mark 11:11-19. Christ Curses the Barren Fig-Tree.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

Jesus cursed a barren fig-tree, using it as an emblem of the Jewish nation's failure to produce spiritual fruit, and warns laborers for souls to produce fruit or risk being cursed.

Scripture: John 12:1

Topics: "Jesus Teachings", "Spiritual Fruitfulness"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer reflects on the events leading up to Jesus' crucifixion, highlighting his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, his sorrow over the state of the temple, and his symbolic actions like cursing the fig tree as a representation of the unfruitfulness of the Jewish nation. Despite the turmoil in Jerusalem, Jesus found solace in the peaceful village of Bethany among his devoted followers, showing his human side by experiencing hunger and fatigue. He continued to teach and confront the religious leaders, emphasizing the importance of bearing spiritual fruit and warning against being unproductive in God's kingdom.

Transcript

Such is the history of the manner in which our Lord spent one of the last days before his death. It was, as we believe, on Sunday that he entered with triumph into Jerusalem. On the evening of that day Mark records that he looked round about on all things, and then went to Bethany with the twelve. And what did those holy eyes behold when they looked round about upon the temple? They must have looked upon the smoking sacrifices, upon the burning lights, and upon the white-robed priests. But these sights cannot have imparted joy to the Savior's heart; for he knew how those sacred ordinances were profaned by an unbelieving nation.

How sweet must the calm of Bethany have seemed after the tumult of Jerusalem! That lovely village, embosomed among the fruitful trees that adorned the foot of Olivet, contained some of the Lord's most devoted followers. Whether he spent the night in solitary prayer on the mountain, or whether he slept beneath the roof of some beloved disciple, we know not. However engaged, he was hid from the pursuit of his enemies. For it is said in John's Gospel concerning this period, "These things spoke Jesus and departed, and did hide himself from them." (12:30.)

On the morning of the next day, (which, we believe, was Monday,) the Lord again repaired to the scene of labor and conflict, to the temple at Jerusalem. The distance was about one mile and a half, and the way

lay through a fertile valley, close by the Garden of Gethsemane, and over the brook Kidron. As the Savior walked he was hungry; for he had probably left Bethany at an early hour, and without taking refreshment. His hunger reminds us that he had a body like our own, and was subject to all our infirmities except sin. It was at this moment he beheld a fig-tree having leaves, and he approached it, but, finding no fruit upon it, he cursed it, saying, "No man eat fruit of you hereafter forever." There is one thing in this account which it is difficult to understand. Mark observes, "The time of figs was not yet." It is natural to inquire, "Why did the Savior expect to find figs before the season was arrived?" This difficulty has been explained. There is a kind of fig-tree which always has leaves, and always bears fruit. The common sort of fig-trees in the early spring neither bear leaves nor fruit. When our Lord beheld afar a fig-tree having LEAVES, he knew it must be of the kind that bears fruit at all times; and when he found none, he cursed it for its barrenness.

But surely there must have been some deep meaning in this action; for a tree can neither deserve cursing nor blessing. It must have been to teach his apostles who then heard his words, and us who now hear them, that Jesus cursed the tree. This tree afforded an apt emblem of the Jewish nation. The leaves of a tree drink in air and moisture, and promote its strength and fruitfulness. The sacred privileges bestowed on the Jews may be compared to leaves. But when the Son of God came looking for fruit, he found none--no repentance--no faith--no love--no holiness--for though there were a few who believed, the nation, as a nation, believed not. He did not expect fruit from the Gentiles, for the time of figs was not yet come with them; but he had a right to expect much from those to whom he had given much.

When he entered the temple again that day, he found the buyers and sellers engaged in their profane traffic. It seems, from this account, that after having been driven away the evening before, they had returned to their old practices, and that the Son of man showed his power again in casting them out.

Jesus passed the day in teaching the people, while maliciously observed by the scribes and chief priests. And, when evening was come, he went out of the city, and sought again to hide himself from his enemies in his favorite retreat. Thus closed another of his few remaining days of sorrow. It seemed as if he spent his strength for nothing, and in vain; but his judgment was with the Lord, and his work with his God. (Is. 49:4.)

Do those who labor for our souls, whether they be ministers or friends, look in vain for fruit? May the Savior's dreadful sentence prove a warning to us. God can say to a man, as well as to a tree, "Let no man eat fruit of you hereafter forever." Is there anyone who could bear the prospect of never being a blessing throughout all the ages of eternity? Even those who are useless and hurtful now, hope that they shall one day be different. But opportunities are rapidly passing away. The trees, that are now bearing the lovely fruits of praise and holiness in the paradise above, began to bring forth fruit unto God when upon earth. Even that malefactor whose Christian course lasted but an hour or two, brought forth good fruit in his believing prayer to Jesus, and in his faithful reproof of his fellow-sufferer; while the aged apostle Paul was like a tree whose boughs are pressed to the earth under the weight of a fragrant and delicious load. Have we begun to bear heavenly fruit? If not, when shall we begin? Let us not delay--we cannot tell how soon God may fix our state forever.

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