

**Mark**  
**Chapter 11:12-21**  
**“Checking Your L/F Ratio”**

**\*All scripture references are from the NASU unless otherwise noted\***

Calvary Chapel Fellowship of Enid  
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**Announcement:**

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**Teaching:** If you weren't with us last week, you might be at a slight disadvantage this morning because we invested last Sunday's time in a study of Passion Week ... the final week of the Lord Jesus' earthly life.

The Reader's digest version is on the overhead ...

So as we pick up the text this morning in **Mark chapter 11, verse 12** ... we're one day into this series of events. Sunday's completed and we begin with the events of Monday morning ... Monday morning, at least, as it would be designated on our American calendars.

So let's go along ...

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**Verse 12:** Stop! ...

**Q. Why Bethany? Who lived there?** – Lazarus and Mary and Martha.

**Q. Remember them?** – Well Jesus and the disciples were probably staying at their house.

And as you consider that ... don't think lightly of their hospitality because this meant that they were taking in 13 grown men ... and one of them was Peter. And it's not like they had a 3,500 square foot, 6 bedroom home. They would have been lined up on the floor and packed in like Sardines, but their answer was still "Yes".

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**Verses 13-14:** At this point ... allow me to share some information because without it you will totally miss the impact of this event. Two things in particular that we need to know:

- 1.** The biblical symbolism of the Fig Tree.
- 2.** And second, an understanding of the fruiting cycle of the Fig Tree.

**Q. First ... what does the Fig Tree symbolize in the Bible?** – Very simply ... it symbolizes the Nation of Israel. The Fig Tree is symbolic of Israel ... so as the Lord deals with this tree it is a message of prophecy upon Israel.

And as to the second issue ... the fruiting cycle of the Fig ... the trees themselves are very slow growing trees so unlike an Apple Tree, they don't bring forth a harvest of fruit for upwards of 20 years. Their process of maturation is slow and tedious.

And that truth is helpful in our understanding of several Old Testament passages because ... as slow as they grow ... the Old Testament uses them to describe long periods of peace in passages like **1 Kings 4:25** and others.

And these trees are fairly fussy ... they require quite a bit of tending and care to produce ... so again ... in times of war the Fig Trees were neglected and so did not produce well.

Solomon's reign of peace, for instance is described by "Fig Trees large enough to shield a man with shade." That phrase indicating a long period of peace.

Now remember the passage we're dealing with is the account of Passion Week ... it's the season of Passover so it would be April for us and **Mark** tells us that it was "**not the season for figs**" when Jesus cursed this tree which brings us to the second thing we need to know about this unique tree.

**Q. What do you expect to see first on a fruit tree; the blossom or the fruit?** – Well that's one of the things that makes the Fig Tree so unique.

See on the fig tree, an immature fig, that the Jewish farmers call a "taksh" [ta'-k-sh], appears at the same time the blossom does.

I read several texts that said they were edible and nourishing, but not particularly enjoyable.

But anyway ... the Fig Tree produces a blossom and an early season fig (a "taksh" [ta'-k-sh]) at the same time. The leaves ... the leaves come later.

The significance is that Jesus wasn't demanding mature fruit ... just some fruit. And even at the time of His encounter with this tree ... He would have been able to tell whether or not this Fig Tree was going to bring forth a fruit crop at all.

Now ... if you would ... just keep that in mind as we look at the rest of the story ...

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**Verses 15-18:** The text seems to sort of change gears on us here, but Mark just seems to be following the chronology of what happened.

Having said that ... we're going to stick with the context instead of the chronology. In this instance we're going to move on down to **verse 19**, but I promise that we will be coming back to give **these verses** due attention.

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**Verses 19-21:** So this is a sort of "acted out parable" and the central character of it, with

little question is the Israel nation, but the message that the Lord's conveying certainly isn't limited to Israel. But we will begin with them ...

What the Lord says here in **Mark** seems harsh enough, but in **Matthew's gospel** it goes even a step further ... saying "**No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you**" (**Matt 21:19**).

Now , as an isolated statement that sounds like Jesus, speaking as God, is finished with the Jews. It sounds like He's saying that they've been cast aside, but we know that's not true.

**Chapters 9-11 of Romans** talk extensively about that. Speaking specifically of the Jews, Paul says in ...

**Rom 11:2 God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew....**

**Q. So if God's not finished with them -- what's the plan?** Well you may recall from our recent study in **Revelation** where John wrote ...

**Rev 7:4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel**

**Remember that? How during the Tribulation Period, God will put into His service 144,000 Jews?**

**Q. But this might seem inconsistent ... how can it be true that "No longer shall there ever be any fruit from [them]" as Jesus states?**

**Q. Thinking specifically of the service we know they will render during the Tribulation ... why do you suppose that that service would not be credited to them as "fruit"? Doesn't that seem like "good works"? And shouldn't "good works" be considered "fruit" and be rewarded? –**

Well ... there's sort of a spiritual answer to that and that is that during that season the Jews are going to serve God, but it really won't be an expression of genuine love ... it's more like they're going to be irresistibly compelled to serve and as such it's not credited as fruit.

It's like the parent who says to their child; "If you don't tell me you love me, I'll spank you until you do."

**Q. That child will eventually say "I love you", but what does it mean?**

God asks us to voluntarily surrender ourselves to His purposes.

But there's also an even more practical answer as to why the Jews won't be rewarded for

their Tribulation service and that is ... they will miss the BEMA seat of rewards.

**Q. Remember the Rewards Judgment of 1 Cor 3:10-15 where works are judged and eternal rewards are issued?**

Well ... if we've got the timeline correct ... the BEMA Judgment Seat of rewards will take place just as the Jews are beginning to serve Him.

So Jesus is right ... they will not bear any fruit.

Now ... think about that. Jesus is basically pronouncing Israel fruitless. And I don't know about you, but I know a lot of fruitless people. People who claim to know God and yet there's no fruit in their life.

And if you know people like that too ... then we all need to take note of how Jesus ministers to these fruitless individuals.

Now at first glance it really might seem that Jesus is angrily cursing this tree, but I don't think that's the whole picture. I don't think He was so much angry as He was brokenhearted.

**Luke 19:41 When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, 42 saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. 43 "For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, 44 and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."**

That took place the day before ... He wept from a broken heart over these fruitless people.

And this convicts me. I know that I often feel more anger than pain at the fruitlessness or denial of the truth or the backslidden state of Christians.

**Q. But, what did Jesus do?** -- He wept.

But that's only part of what the Lord instructs here. As I said, the main subject is the Nation Israel, but they're not the only subject ... so think back with me to the Fig Tree if you would ...

All the way back in **Amos (7:14)**, the need to have more than one Fig Tree was known and as a result the Holy Lands, even today, are rich with Fig plantations.

So we will won't to note then that **Matthew's Gospel** specifically says ...

**Matt 21:19 Seeing a lone fig tree .... (emphasis added)**

A fig tree will not bring forth abundant fruit if it remains alone. Neither will we. The tree must be pollinated. Here's a quote from the encyclopedia that I just love for its instructional value ...

*The immature flowers harbor small insects which convey pollen to the female flowers and by their irritating presence stimulate the growth of the fruit.*  
(emphasis added)

It strikes me as, too much to be a coincidence, when I compare just how similar that is to ...

**Heb 10:24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.**

So the next time you feel a little irritated by the brothers and sisters that God has surrounded you with ... remember that it's God's method of "pollinating" you so that you might bring forth more fruit.

And on the flip side of that ... it also instructs us not to be too afraid of being a little bit irritating for the sake of someone's spiritual growth. We need to realize, that just like this Fig Trees, our fruit will be sparse without the "stirring up" of our brethren in fellowship.

When Jesus came to this tree, He expected to see young fruit, but He found none. He saw it from a distance and based on the way it appeared, He should have been able to reasonably expect fruit, but all He found was a lot of leaves.

And the foliage on a fig tree is exceptionally dense. It's very hard to see through ... so the leaves provide an effective cover for fruitlessness.

**Q. Remember what Adam and Eve used fig leaves for?** -- To cover their nakedness and shame (**Gen 3:7**).

There's clearly a connection to that and therefore there's application for us both individually and corporately.

As a church it's easy to look fruitful from a distance. I've seen countless leafy, but fruitless churches and I'm sure you have as well.

Man they look great, but don't bother lifting up the leaves ... that's all there is.

I have prayed that if we ever grow leafy, but fruitless, that God would pull us up.

Without Christian fruit -- it's no longer a Christian church. At that point it's just a club. We could just change our name to the Rotary Club, or the Moose Lodge. For that matter, we could just as well call ourselves the Uptown Pub or something. We would be nothing more than a meeting hall.

I'd much rather, that we look ragged and beat up with fruit ... than to look like we've got it all together, but have a bunch of barren branches disguised by religiosity. May there always be more fruit than leaves on us.

**Q. But what about you as an individual? How's your "Leaf To Fruit Ratio"? Do you put on a better show than is really true?**

**Matt 23:27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.**

Leaves may disguise you from the eyes of men, but not from God. He's big enough and close enough to lift up those leaves and have a peek at what's going on beneath them.

It's also often and appropriately pointed out that this tree withered ... from the roots up ...

**Mark 11:20 As they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up.**

It "withered from the roots up" and that's exactly how it happens for most of us. It's the hidden parts that wither first:

1. It's our quiet time with the Lord.
2. It's our private prayer life or our devotional time.

The leaves are the last to go. We continue to do the outward stuff. We don't scrape off the bumper sticker. We don't burn our Bibles - we just stop reading them.

But don't be fooled into thinking that's OK! That's a plan straight from Satan's strategic planning department.

Satan loves for us to continue covering up. He loves it when we fake it. God's plan though, is that we would recognize it, not cover it up. Recognize it, confess it in prayer and confess it to one another ...

**James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. ....**

But you can't do that unless you're in faithful fellowship.

**Ps 1:1 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. 3 He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.**

Hey there's an idea! Get into God's word. Not every once in a while -- not just on Sunday morning, but every day! The water of God's Word is absolutely essential for a healthy tree. Not only will the fruit cease when the water source is removed, but if that source isn't reestablished quickly, the roots and then the leaves and eventually, the vary tree will wither and die.

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**Conclusion:**

**Q. Are you a leafy, but fruitless tree?** Please hear me on this ... those leaves will not disguise you in the eyes of God. God, not only searches the heart ... He judges it.

Leaves will burn in the Day of Judgment. If you're a fake. If you've been playing the game of Christianity -- God's not fooled. He takes no pleasure in leaves.

Jesus came to the Fig Tree looking for fruit. Jesus comes to you and me every day, looking for fruit.

**Q. Will He find any?**

He's with you today and He'll be with you tomorrow.

**Q. When you lay your head down tonight ... what will you be able to say to Him in prayer that you did for His glory today?**

- 1.** A healthy tree requires water -- make Bible study a daily priority.
- 2.** A bountiful fruit crop requires "Christian cross pollination" -- make sure you're surrounded by people that will stir up good works within you. Not just here at church, but as often as possible.

You and I don't need to hide ourselves behind Fig leaves as Adam and Eve did. We've been given the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ and the vary Spirit of God to bring forth fruit to His glory and for His pleasure.

May our Lord not have to walk away hungry the next time He visits our tree.