

Fellowship of Champions

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Mark 11:12-25

06-Mar-2022

(Complete Sermon Preparation Study Notes Along with Sermon Introduction and Conclusion)

Good morning! Please open your Bibles to Mark 11:12-24. Our text this morning will cover two events in the life of Christ and the Nation of Israel: the *cursing of the fig tree* and the *cleansing of the temple*.

Before we jump into the text, I want to brag on you a bit first. Our family has been here just six months, since August. We've met so many of you, and to a person, each one of you has been welcoming and kind, generous with your time in helping us to learn our way around, inviting us into your homes to share meals and get to know each other. We're learning about your ministries, and seeing your heart. This is a fine church, and we're grateful to be here. Thank you for letting us be a part of you.

Next, I want to thank our Pastor for opening his pulpit this morning and allowing me to share some of my reflections on today's text, which I pray will be edifying to your souls. Dr. Dustin Nelson is rare in these parts. He brings humor and quiet humility to his messages; you know that better than me. He is personable and warm. He has a sharp mind and a quick wit. But his depth of understanding and keen interpretation of Scripture, along with his verse-by-verse style of preaching, we call that *Expository Preaching*, are a combination that is hard to find these days.

Stephie and I spent the first year of the pandemic searching online for a new church home, and to God's glory, we found Fellowship of Champions. We are grateful to the elders for calling this man, and to you, the congregation, for loving and supporting him and Caroline and the kiddos. The first day we visited the church in person, one of you sweet ladies came up to greet us. As we chatted, you said, aren't we blessed to have Dustin? Steph and I agreed, and we've made Fellowship our home.

~~I must mention Brice, who's company I truly enjoy, and who is devoted to impacting our young people for Christ. I know that's easy to say, and it may even sound cliched, or the trite platitude, but I've spent some time with him, picked his brain with lots of questions, and I've watched him in action. He is the real deal. He loves our kids.~~

~~While I'm at it, doesn't Kristy and the worship team, and the guys in the booth backing them up, open heaven's gates every Sunday morning for us, and take us right into the throne room where we can adore our God? They lead us to that spiritual rock, cleft for us, that we can drink and have our fill. They're not too flashy, and they know it's not about them. They always strike just the right note. The qualities and people Steph, our son, Noah, and I have found here at Fellowship are like your favorite big comfy couch, Baby Bear's bed, "Just right!" Okay, enough about you.~~

Our text this morning will be Mark 11 verses 12-24. Now, before we read together, we should back up to last week's message and get the lay of the land. Jesus and His disciples are in the middle of a significant and closely connected series of events, and the precision with which God works them out is striking.

1. Jesus has concluded His 3-year public teaching and miracle ministry, the purpose of which was to authenticate His Messiahship. He is the one of whom Moses and John the Baptist prophesied. He cast out demons, healed the sick, and raised the dead, just like the prophets said He would.
2. Jesus has entered Jerusalem. Jesus did so on the very day foretold in Daniel's 70-week prophecy (Dan 9:25), which Daniel received from the angel, Gabriel, in the 67th year of Israel's Babylonian captivity in 519 BC.

#Dan 9:25

"So you are to know and discern [that] from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince [there will be] seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.

"from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem" issued by Artaxerxes Longimanus, King of Persia, on March 14, 445 BC (Neh 2:1-8). "until Messiah the Prince" (Mashiach Nagid) - Palm Sunday - the Day Christ presented Himself (and was recognized and accepted by the people) as King of the Jews, April 6, 32 AD (Matt 21:1-9), was exactly 173,880 days.

#Neh 2:1-8 Matt 21:1-9

Now, for you engineers and math wizards, I'll run you through the numbers. Reckoning the dates to the prophecy: 445 BC to 32 AD = 477 years, less 1 year (since there is no "0" year) = 476 years, times 365 days (the days per year on the Western Gregorian - as adjusted from the Julian - solar astronomical calendar) = 173,740 days, plus 24 days (March 14 to April 6) = 173,764 days, plus 116 days (adding 1 leap-year day for every four years, except for years divisible by 100 but which are not also divisible by 400) = **173,880 days**, divided by 360 days (the days per year on the Babylonian - prior to the Julian lunar astronomical calendar in use by Israel at the time of this prophecy during their captivity in Babylon) = 483 years, divided 7 years (a week of years) = **69 weeks** (exactly "seven weeks and sixty-two weeks").

This was all worked out by Sir Robert Anderson in his book, *The Coming Prince*, first published in England in 1894. And if that's not interesting enough to keep you awake, Sir Robert was a senior official at Scotland Yard during the Jack the Ripper murders.

3. Jesus enters the Temple precincts and conducts an inspection.
4. He curses the fig tree (where our study this morning begins).
5. He cleanses the Temple (where our study this morning ends).
6. So, what happens next? Jesus dies on the cross, is resurrected, ascends back to the Father in heaven.

7. 38 years later, Jesus sends Titus Vespasian and 4 Roman legions to destroy the Temple and the city in 70 A.D.

The point of the dual events of our study this morning (cursing the tree and cleansing the temple) - and I do have to commend Pastor Dustin for breaking up the sermon schedule with these two pericopes (fancy seminary word for segment of text discussing and idea or event) together in one message - is that the Messiah has come, and Judaism (the old wine skin; the Old Covenant), is dead. The old sacrificial system, the dietary laws, the feasts, and all the rest of it - the entire religion, such as it was - was tired, and worn out, and corrupt, and collapsing. Even the Sabbath itself, which never speaks of physical rest, but our spiritual rest in Christ (way for the change to Sunday as the Day of the Lord. 3:7-4:11, Col 2:16-17) - Matthew 11:28-30 "*Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*" The Old Covenant is passing away; the New Covenant has come.

#Heb 3:7-4:11, Col 2:16-17, Matt 11:28-30

Now that we have the context, let's read our text - Mark 11:12-24

Everything recorded in Scripture that Jesus thinks, says, or does has a spiritual meaning, if not within itself, certainly the fact of its inclusion therein. Jesus made no casual remarks or off-hand gestures, and He took no action without it having deep spiritual meaning. Everything that is recorded about His life had behind it the spiritual purpose of advancing the Father's plan for the redemption of mankind. God's Word is perfect in every way, including economy. Everything is useful, nourishing, important - nothing is wasted. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

#2Ti 3:16-17

Surprisingly, a number of scholars throw up their hands at this event. They see Jesus cursing a fig tree as impetuous fiat, God in a moment of frustration, misusing His power, or (I don't know which is worse) some see it as fictitious, that it never happened. Nonsense on both accounts. What we are about to discover is that this historical event (it really happened), this *cursing of the fig tree*, is a living parable. Jesus is acting out a parable, hidden within which is a spiritual lesson that held great significance for Israel at the time, and also reaches all the way down through history to us today.

In any parable, we have to discern the players. So here's the playbill:

1. Jesus is playing **Himself** - He is God. He is dismantling Israel's entire religious apparatus: the sacrificial system, the clergy, the corruptions, all of it, and ushering in the New Covenant.
2. The fig tree is a common (idiom) symbol for various aspects of the nation of Israel (Mt 21:33-43, 24:32-35, Luke 13:6-9, Hos 9:10, Jer 24:1-8, Nah 3:12), who in this instance, was spiritually dead at the arrival of her Messiah, without any discernable fruit, a conquered and occupied people, and suffering the consequences of her rebellion against God. The fig tree

represents Israel from the perspective of the **nation's clergy**. Israel's spiritual leaders had charge over her as God's vineyard, but failed to produce the fruit thereof.

3. The leaves are a double entendre after a fashion: first, the leaves represent the clergy's **outward false righteousness**, which also serves, second, to camouflage their sin of spiritual fruitlessness and blind outsiders to their broken spiritual condition. (Remember Adam and Eve's fig leaves, and how they tried vainly to cover their nakedness (read that, "shame of their sin") what did they accomplish? Nothing. Ge 3:7 "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings." Ge 3:21 "The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.") With its outward appearance (leaves) the tree promised spiritual fruit (figs), but on close inspection, it had none. Her religious establishment - the Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes, the priesthood, the Chief Priests (Sanhedrin), etc. had all the outward appearance of Righteousness, which they exhibited through their close adherence to the oral traditions (those 613 false laws), but they were spiritually fruitless and dead.
4. The figs represent the **teaching** of the religious establishment that, ironically, has NOT produced spiritual fruit in Israel. Remember, Jesus warned His disciples in Matthew 16, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." He was warning them not to partake of their teaching. (Matt 16:6-12)

#Matt 16:6-12, 24:32-35, Hos 9:10, Jer 24:1-8, Nah 3:12, Gen 3:7, 21

Note: Pastor Dustin will be preaching on this in the coming weeks when he gets to the parable of the vineyard in Mark 12. The continuity of the passages we are currently walking through must not be overlooked. God is showing His hand.

Now that we have our hermeneutics situated, let's work through the text, shall we?

Mark 11:12 (NOTES)

12 On the next day, when they had left Bethany, He became hungry.

"they had left Bethany" - Bethany (Gr. - beth = house, any = misery or affliction, in the sense of poverty). Jesus emptied Himself to condescend from heaven to our poor, lowly estate here on earth, and over the past three years, He has been pouring Himself out in ministry, which is now coming to its end.

"He [Jesus] became hungry" - As with every event and/or parable in the life and ministry of Christ, there is deep spiritual significance to this one. Jesus made no casual remarks or off-hand gestures that are recorded in Scripture, and He took no action recorded in Scripture without it having deep spiritual meaning. Jesus' bodily functions per se' are not at issue here. Rather, His hunger represents something spiritual. Yes, He was hungry, but we are being told about it for a spiritual reason. As we've already discussed, this incident with the fig tree is not going to be some pointless feature of Mark's short Gospel, thrown in to add color and texture. Jesus' hunger here has at least two connected meanings:

1. It represents His, that is God's, desire for spiritual fruit from Israel.

2. And more to the point, I think, Jesus has an even greater right to expect spiritual fruit from Israel's religious establishment, those whom He placed in charge of the spiritual welfare of His chosen people.

In this context, the satisfaction of Jesus' hunger is the responsibility of Israel's religious leadership: the priesthood, the Sanhedrin, the Pharisees (Gr. - "separatist"), the Sadducees (from Heb. - Zadok = righteous), the Scribes, and others - each has failed the nation; each has failed God. Everything that is recorded about His life had behind it the spiritual purpose of advancing the Father's plan for the redemption of mankind.

Mark 11:13 (NOTES)

13 Seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went *to see* if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs.

"a fig tree in leaf" - Species of Judaeen fig trees produce figs first, followed by leaves. This would have been well known to and inferred by Jewish readers at the time. Thus, when Jesus saw the fig tree "in leaf," He had a reasonable expectation of it bearing figs.

"Seeing at a distance" - Fig leaves can be up to a foot across, making it difficult to confirm the presence of fruit without a closer inspection. If production of figs did not precede the emergence of such overwhelmingly large leaves, the figs would have difficulty accessing the sun to ripen.

"when He [Jesus] came to it, He found nothing" - The tree, having given the appearance of fruit-bearing from a distance, on closer inspection, was barren. The leaves (the outward appearance) advertised figs; but on close inspection there were no figs (spiritual fruit).

Israel's religious leadership gave all the outward appearance of bearing fruit: phylacteries on their foreheads, ostentatious prayers, public tithing, the 613 oral laws they added to Scripture, and so on. But on close inspection, Israel's clergy were exposed as frauds, and frauds they were!
#Mt 23:13-15, 23-33

"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. ["Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation."] "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. "You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. "You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. "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. "So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, 'If we had been [living] in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in [shedding] the blood of the prophets.' "So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. "Fill up, then, the measure [of the guilt] of your fathers. "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?

"it was not the season for figs" - The season in God's historical timeline for Israel's religious apparatus (the priesthood, the Sanhedrin (Chief Priests), the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the scribes, and teachers of the law, had come to a close. The season of the clergy's ministrations to the spiritual needs of the people had passed. That was last season. Ecclesiastes 3:1 reminds us, that everything has its appointed time and season. **[Now, I normally preach, teach, and quote from the N-A-S-B version of the Bible, but for this particular quote, let us refer to the B-Y-R-D-S version of Ecclesiastes 3:1 - "To everything, turn, turn, turn, there is a season, turn, turn, turn, and a time to every purpose under heaven." If you're under a certain age, that might not have resonated with you. That's okay. Ask your grandparents to tell you about their hippie days. I'm sure they remember that version.]**

#Ec 3:1

Mark 11:14 (NOTES)

14 He said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again!" And His disciples were listening.

Is this the Sunday school Jesus we all know? This may seem out of character for Jesus, at first glance. But He has a plan. Something much bigger is going on here. Why did Jesus curse the tree? Because it didn't bear any fruit. The Matthew account informs us that the fig tree withered immediately.

#Matt 21:19

John the Baptist prophesied this event.

"But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

#Mt 3:7-10

"may no one ever eat fruit from you again" - Jesus is cursing the fig tree as a symbol of the Jewish clergy and their coming end as an institution. He is not cursing Israel so that it would end, only its religious establishment - the folks in charge, and their institutions - the sacrificial system, the Old Covenant, the clergy, even the temple, as we will see. The food they had provided the nation left it spiritually malnourished.

Jesus did not simply and only want to punish the clergy for its failures, for its vacuous and pompous affectations, for its absurdly exaggerated oral law, which added 613 false commands to God's already perfect and complete Word. Jesus' curse took down the tree, but its emphasis was on its lack of fruit. He could have said to the tree, "May you cease to live." Instead, He said, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." His objective in cursing the tree was that His chosen people would no longer suffer under the diet of the clergy's false teaching. They needed to dine on the Gospel, and to feast on the Bread of Life.

Note: Mishnah together with its commentaries makes up the Talmud.

"His disciples were listening." - Once again, as they had been viewing a live parable, they didn't get it. Pastor Dustin has shown us many times in our Mark study that the disciples were often clueless. Jesus used parables, not to teach per se, but to hide the truth in a story, or in this case, an event. He used parables to protect the truth from the unbeliever, the scoffer, the profane to whom it was not given.

#Mt 13:9-18

"The one who has ears, let him hear." And the disciples came up and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" And Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'You shall keep on listening, but shall not understand; And you shall keep on looking, but shall not perceive; For the heart of this people has become dull [largely due to the failures of their clergy], With their ears they scarcely hear, And they have closed their eyes, Otherwise they might see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, Understand with their heart, and return, And I would heal them.' But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. [yes, but not because they have spiritual insight - and remember, they have not yet been born again or indwelt with the Holy Spirit - they see because Jesus reveals it to them] For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. "Listen then to the parable of the Sower".

Jesus then goes on to explain the parable. If He didn't explain it, His disciples would be left to puzzle and argue over it, as was oft their practice.

Mark 11:15 (NOTES)

15 Then they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves;

Jesus has declared Himself to be the Messiah and He has been embraced by the people. Now, He cleanses the Temple. The Messiah of the Jews could not very well arrive on the scene and then leave His own House in disorder and corruption. This cleansing of the Temple, which was built by King Solomon (the son of David), was an act of THE KING, THE Son of David, the Messiah.

"Temple" = dwelling place of God. From the Greek word "hieron" which means holy, or set apart for the purposes of God. The OT word for the structure was "tabernacle" or dwelling place. But, God had been absent for centuries from His dwelling place in the Temple. He had left because of the rebellion of Israel. Now, He has returned to it as Malachi prophesied. But He has returned to it in the second person of the Trinity, Jesus.

#Mal 3:1

"Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts."

But, the people will reject God again, and for the Temple, it will be the final rejection. The Temple and its entire system of worship will be destroyed. It will be destroyed in the sense that a). Jesus, who is the Temple of God will be rejected and crucified. This rejection will usher in a new system of worship that will replace the old system since Christ will have in every way fulfilled the old system with His coming. And it will also be destroyed in the sense that b). the physical structure will be demolished 38 years later in 70 AD, as there will be no more need of it since Jesus will have replaced it with His body and the extension of His body, the church which is the body of Christ.

#Matt 23:37-24:2, Luke 19:41-44

Mt 23:37-39 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! "For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

"He entered the temple and began to drive out those ... " - We refer to this as the "Cleansing of the Temple." Perhaps a better title would be the "Preparing of the Temple for Burial." And the temple will suffer a violent death in its destruction in 70 AD.

Mt 24:1-2 "Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down."

"those who were buying and selling ... the money changers ... those ... selling doves" - Customers and merchants alike - everyone was being kicked out. Jesus was incensed. In the John account we learn that Jesus made and used a whip (scourge). His Father was being dishonored; His temple defiled with the vulgarities of commerce.

#John 2:15

This is not Solomon's Temple, or Zerubbabel's second Temple, but Herod's third Temple. The fourth Temple is Jesus' body. The fifth Temple is the church, the body of Christ, who is indwelt by His Spirit.

#Joh 2:13-22

Mark 11:17 (NOTES)

16 and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. **17** And He *began* to teach and say to them, "Is it not written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS'? But you have made it a ROBBERS' DEN."

The religious establishment had spiritually destroyed it. The Ark of the Covenant was long lost by this date. The Ark vanished in 586 BC when the Babylonians conquered the Southern Kingdom and took the people into captivity. With the Ark went the Shekinah Glory - that is, God's visible manifest presence among His people, which first appeared in the tabernacle's holy of holies, above the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant, and later when the Ark was moved into the temple.

#Eze 10:4, 11:22-23

"MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS? But you have made it a ROBBERS' DEN." - Jesus relies on OT Scripture (Isaiah and Jeremiah) to combat the perpetrators of this abomination in similar fashion to His quoting Scripture when He sparred with Satan, their spiritual father, during Jesus' temptation in the wilderness.

#Is 56:7, Jer 7:11, John 8:44

Mark 11:18 (NOTES)

18 The chief priests and the scribes heard *this*, and *began* seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching.

"they were afraid of Him, for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching." - They are not so much upset with Jesus for what He has done, as they are for the acclaim He is receiving for it. Mt 27:18 "*For he knew that because of envy they had handed Him over.*" They are concerned for their own welfare on several counts.

First, Jesus has cleansed their Temple. That it required cleansing at all was an indictment of their own ministry and their corrupt stewardship of the Temple and its system of religion. They should have prevented the temple from becoming defiled, or at least cleaned it up once things went too far. Jesus has demonstrated to the religious establishment, and everyone present, that they are frauds, and that their judgment will not be withheld

Second, the people have declared Jesus to be their Messiah. If He assumes power, the clergy will be displaced. They wanted His position and everything that went with it. In the parable of the vinegrowers, Mt 21:38, the religious leaders "*saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.'*" They seek to squelch this manifestation

of His true person (God), and in the process deny God His due praise. Jesus is the Lord God, and He will not be denied.

Just as Satan was blinded by his own pride and believed that he could be exalted above God, the religious establishment in Israel falsely believed that somehow they could maintain their place of honor by containing and destroying Jesus, over whom they wished to exalt themselves, and who is Himself God. It is they and their entire way of life that will be destroyed, just as Satan will be destroyed.

#Is 14:12-15, Rev 20:10-15

Mark 11:20 (NOTES)

19 When evening came, they would go out of the city. **20** As they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots *up*.

"the fig tree withered *from the roots up*" - Nothing will be left of the corrupt former religious establishment. Dead from the roots up - the temple utterly destroyed in 70 AD. To get the gold leaf off the walls of the temple, Titus ordered it burned and disassembled, stone-by-stone. Just 3 years after the temple was destroyed, the parties of the Pharisees and the Sadducees had been dissolved, and the Zealots and Essenes (keepers of the more lately discovered Dead Sea Scrolls) had all disbanded.

#Mt 21:20

NOTE: Matthew flips these last two events, placing the cleansing of the temple before the cursing of the fig tree. There is much critical debate as to whether Matthew or Mark has the correct chronology, but either way, it has no impact on our hermeneutic. The interpretation is the same. I should point out that Matthew, writing primarily to the Jews, often rearranges events to advance his point of view, which is that Jesus is the King of the Jews. Matthew's genealogy even begins with Abraham, the first Jew, to make his point. Conversely, Mark is writing to the Romans and emphasizing Jesus' servant nature, as a beast of burden. Mark has no genealogy, which makes his point. No one cares about the pedigree of a servant.

Mark 11:21 (NOTES)

21 Being reminded, Peter *said to Him, "Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered."

Good ol' Pete, pointing out the obvious. Jesus didn't need to look. The demise of the fig tree was certain the moment Jesus spoke. He curses everything that is false, pretentious, and insincere. Remember Ananias and Sapphira, who tried to put one over on everybody when they sold some land, but kept back part of the price for themselves? They could have kept the whole sales price, but the pretense of giving it all to the church cost them their lives.

#Ac 5:1-11

Mark 11:22 (NOTES)

22 And Jesus answered saying to them, "Have faith in God.

"Have faith in God." - Jesus knows the end is near. Soon, His disciples will need to rely on prayer like they never have before. Their entire world is going to be shaken like an earthquake. Jesus takes this moment to remind His disciples to remain focused on God. Keeping their eyes on Him, which will be accomplished through prayer.

23 "Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be *granted* him. **24** "Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be *granted* you.

Mark 11:23 (NOTES)

Jesus gives some principles for prayer in these final two verses:

1. Do not doubt in your heart.
2. Believe what you ask for.
3. Believe you have received what you ask.

Faith alone will not bring about answers to all prayers. There are numerous additional principles in His teaching, and elsewhere in Scripture, which must also be remembered. Here are a few:

Mark 11:24 (NOTES)

4. "If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." Jesus Himself in the Garden of Gethsemane prayed, "Nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done."
#1Jo 5:14, Lk 22:42
5. If we, as husbands, live with our "wives in an understanding way ... and show her honor", our prayers "will not be hindered."
#1Pe 3:7
6. If we are righteous in God's sight, He attends to our prayers. "FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL."
#1Pe 3:12
7. If we are persistent in our prayers, so as to show our faith in God as we ask, He will answer us
#Luke 11:5-10
8. If we are fervent in prayer, much is accomplished.
#Jas 5:16

9. To pray with a heart of Thanksgiving, brings the promise of peace.
#Php 4:6-7

10. Simple, quiet, private prayer is effective with God.
#Mt 6:6-8

CONCLUSION:

As we transition to our time of reflection, how do we process all this down into a manageable application for our daily lives? I can think of two questions to consider:

1. Am I like one of these clergy, with a phony outward righteousness, but actually spiritually fruitless and dead on the inside? Ask God to reveal your true condition. Repent, and turn to God through faith in Christ.
2. If I am a true born-again Christian, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, am I taking true spiritual care of myself as the temple of God's Spirit, or am I allowing corruption to enter in? Ask Him to show you. Return to Him, and stay close.