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# Bearing Fruit and Worshiping God

*fig leaves and money changers*

**CAMPBELL CHAPEL FWBC - SERMON**

**Bearing Fruit and Worshiping God**

March 11, 2009

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**Mark 11:12-19**

- 12 And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:*
- 13 And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.*
- 14 And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever. And his disciples heard it.*
- 15 And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves;*
- 16 And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.*
- 17 And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.*
- 18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.*
- 19 And when even was come, he went out of the city.*

Last week we talked about the triumphal entry. Jesus goes into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Do you remember talking about that? People were going with Him, from Jericho, and they followed Him down the valley, coming with Him. There were multitudes in and around Bethany and Jerusalem because of His fame where He had raised Lazarus from the dead just a few days before. There were multitudes and multitudes of people, as He went into Jerusalem riding on the donkey. We talked about that last week and how the people were crying...Hosanna; which means, "Save us now." They were recognizing that He was the Messiah. They were crying out. The people were amazed, astonished, and happy and filled with amazement. Here He is; He is the Messiah and He has come. They were just having a great time.

- 11 And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.*

He comes into Jerusalem with multitudes, thousands upon thousands of people with Him, around Him; beside of Him...He is proclaiming Himself. He is proving what the scriptures have said that when the Messiah would come, He would enter Jerusalem. He is proving—one more time—that He is Messiah, the King of Israel.

He goes into the temple. I want you to think about this just for a moment. It has an important part in our lesson tonight. The Bible says that He enters into Jerusalem and goes into the temple and when He looked round about upon all things...When you read this in the original, He goes in there and basically He looks around at everything in there, not just a glancing look, but He took inventory of everything that was going on inside the temple. Keep that in your mind as we go down through here, because I think that will play a part in this lesson.

*12 And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:*

Palm Sunday is when He goes into Jerusalem. He is going to die on Friday. Monday morning is when He goes into Jerusalem. He goes back. He is leaving Bethany. He stayed with Mary, Martha and Lazarus in Bethany. He is leaving Bethany. Bethany is just short distance away from Jerusalem. He is leaving Bethany and He is coming to Jerusalem. As He is walking, the Bible says that He is hungry.

That never stuck out in my mind like it did today. As I was thinking about that today; Mary and Martha, no doubt, were good hosts. I'm sure that they had plenty in their house to eat. I'm sure that had He wanted to eat something while He was there, they would have been more than glad to prepare something for Him. They did that on many different occasions.

I don't know what time He gets up on this particular morning. He probably got up way before daylight, as we would read in the scriptures; many times He would do that. While it was yet dark, He would pray and different things. I thought about what He saw the day before. He sees the thousands upon thousands of people recognizing Him as being the Messiah; the King of Israel. They are saying "Save us now." Even though they were misunderstanding what He was about to do, yet they were filled with joy. It would have been a wonderful place to be with people praising the Lord. Even though they misunderstood what He was about to do; they did not see the cross. They were looking at the kingdom; they didn't see the cross. He goes into the temple and what does He see?

There is no doubt in my mind that it broke His heart. I really think that probably this night, on Sunday night, the Bible doesn't say this, but in my own mind; He probably didn't rest a whole lot. Do you know why? It was because of what He saw.

I can relate to that some. When I see people, going the wrong direction in life, different ones, different times, and different situations; there are times that I can't sleep. I don't sleep a whole lot anyway, but there are times that I don't sleep any because of thinking about people and seeing their lives, where they are headed and what is going to happen if they don't change. Jesus goes into this city, a city that meant so much to Him and to the children of Israel. He goes into this city. He goes into the temple and sees all that is going on. There is no doubt in my mind that it troubled Him. In my own way of thinking, he probably did not rest much. He probably did not rest much on Sunday night. He gets up on Monday morning and He starts toward this city again. It was just a short distance. It was not going to take Him long to get there.

The Bible says He's hungry. He didn't eat before He left for whatever reason. I don't why. However, the Bible says that He is hungry. Look what happens here.

*13 And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.*

Now when you read that, it doesn't make much sense to us, however, let's look at something here. He is going towards Jerusalem and He is hungry. He sees a fig tree. He looks at the fig tree and He sees the leaves. That may not make much sense to us, however, when you look at a fig tree, it shoots out its buds before it has leaves. In other words, before a fig tree would have leaves, it would have figs. Okay? If we would have been there, the disciples were with Him, when they saw the fig tree; they would have automatically thought that there would have been figs on it because it had leaves on it. Since it had leaves, therefore, they thought it would have had figs. Jesus sees the tree, He's hungry. He wants something to eat. He looks at the tree and we know that He knows that there are no figs on the tree. We understand that. He knows all things, but He is going to teach His disciples something and not only that but He is going to teach us a wonderful lesson here too, I think.

The Bible says He came and perhaps He is going to find something on it to eat.

*13 And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.*

What it is saying is that this is early for a fig tree to have leaves on it, but it would be real early for it to have figs on it. In other words, it wasn't that time yet. It wasn't time for a fig tree... You know an apple tree doesn't bear apples in the spring of the year. It bears them in the fall. It's in late summer or early fall. It wasn't time for figs to be on yet. It wasn't time for them to do that. However, He sees the leaves and naturally, if we would have been there, we would have thought that it would have had figs on it. Again, the figs are there before the leaves are there. Okay? If you see the leaves then naturally, there would be figs there.

*14 And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever. And his disciples heard it.*

Now that sounds harsh doesn't it? Let's look at something here at what Jesus is seeing. He sees a tree that has leaves on it. He goes to where it is at and it has no leaves. He has just been to the city the night before. He has just gone into the city with all the commotion, the pomp and all the show and all the multitudes crying saying, "Save us now." He goes into the temple and sees all the things going on there. We will talk about that in a minute. He goes back to Bethany and He gets up the next morning and He sees a tree with leaves, but no figs.

When you read the Bible, when you read the Old Testament; Israel is compared unto a fig tree. He is saying something here to these disciples. He is teaching us an awesome lesson here today and I hope that we can learn from this. Israel was putting forth the leaves but they did not have any figs. With all the appearances, when the other nations may have looked around them, or even the people in

the nation of Israel, when they looked at themselves, their cities, and different individuals; they had leaves. Therefore, they would have thought that they would have had figs, but they did not have any.

What that is saying is this. Even though on the outward appearance, they looked like they were bearing fruit. However, when you got to the tree and upon a closer examination you could see that there was no fruit there.

I want you to think about something today. How much of our lives are like that? In my life and in your life; a Christian's life should be a life of bearing fruit. There should never be a time in our lives that we should not be bearing fruit. There should never be a time in our lives that we are just bearing leaves. There should never be a time in our lives that when people look at us, we make look pretty—our leaves may be long and slender, looking like a tree bearing fruit, but we should never be a tree that just looks like we are bearing fruit. We should be a tree that **IS** bearing fruit.

That is what was so sad with this nation. They were going through all the motions. They appeared to be sound spiritually. They appeared to be a nation that was reverencing and worshiping Almighty God. However, upon closer inspection, it was very plain that they were not. You cannot be a fig tree if you are not bearing leaves [figs]. You cannot be a Christian if you are not bearing fruit. Christian people bear fruit. Get that. It is more than just playing the part. It is more than just looking like something or somebody.

In our church world today, if you look at all the denominations and look at all the things that go on in all of our denominations—the Protestants, the Catholics, and all the different denominations across the world—you will see a lot of pretty leaves. You will see things that appear like we are really doing things for God. However, upon closer inspection, you will find out that there is no fruit there. Do you know why? It is because you cannot bear good fruit and live in **SIN**.

The problem here with the nation is that it had a root problem. The leaves were there. The tree probably looked healthy. If we would have been there to look at it, the leaves no doubt, would have been green. However, there were some issues going on. The reason that they were not bearing any fruit is because they were not connected to the vine.

The reason today why a lot of church members do not bear fruit...some church members are not saved. I'm judging anybody when I say that. I'm doing that at all. If we are not bearing the fruit that the Bible says a Christian would bear, then we are not saved. Truth? Everybody should say Amen or ouch—one or the other. We are all in one category or the other. We are either bearing fruit or we are not bearing fruit. We are either going through the motions, we may have leaves hanging all over us, but if we are not bearing any fruit, and then what are we doing? What good are we to God, if we are not bearing any fruit? What good are we? Are we any good?

This tree, even though it looked pretty, it could not be a blessing to anybody. A fig tree without figs on it could not nourish anybody. Could it? It had no fruit upon it so therefore, no one could come along and eat of the fruit and be nourished, and strengthened by it. Do you know what it was doing? It

was just taking up space. Do you know what Jesus knew? Jesus knew that all it was going to be doing is just taking up space.

When we look at this it looks like a hard thing sometimes, that He would curse this tree because it was not bearing any fruit. Jesus knows what we are doing today. In our world, in our Baptist denomination, we have many folks who have a lot of leaves on them. They look like Christians. They may do Christian functions. They may be a part of Christian society, but in reality, they are not. I'm not being judgmental when I say this. However, if they have never bared any fruit that God's Word said a Christian will bear, then they are not a Christian. I'm not being mean when I say that. The reason that I say things like that is this. We need to understand that if we are going to be pleasing to God, [we have to bear fruit.] If we are going to be people that God is going to bless and to use, [we have to bear fruit.] If we are going to be nourishment to others and do things that are going to bring glory to God and be a blessing to others, then we have to bear fruit. We have to bear fruit. A Christian that is living in the will of God cannot help but to bear fruit. If you are living as you should be living, it is impossible for you not to bear fruit. You can't help it. It's automatic. When we are living in the will of God and doing what God has asked us to do, then you can't help from bearing fruit.

Why do we want, so many times, to be trees with no fruit? I don't know why we want to do that. I think sometimes it is because that we want to promote ourselves, to promote family, business, or whatever in life. Why would we want to go through life and just—even though that we come to church, sing in the choir, teach, preach, or whatever it is that we do; why would we want to just do that. Live all of our lives and die never ever bear any fruit. Why would we want to live like that? Why would we want to be like that?

The greatest thing in my life, the thing that I get the greatest enjoyment out of in life is helping people, be a blessing to people, be an encouragement to people. When they are down and out, to just encourage them along. When people need to be fed, I like to feed people. I like to encourage people. I like to help people along. That is the greatest blessing in my life. That is what I live for. If I could not do that then I wouldn't want to live. I mean that. Why do we want to be trees with leaves, but no fruit? We are just taking up space. That is all that we are doing is just taking up space.

The thing about it is that Jesus knows who we are. He knows all about us. From a distance—many people looks the part of a Christian. Many people talk the part of a Christian. However, when you start inspecting the fruit, you will find out that there is something wrong somewhere.

It gets quiet when you talk about things like that, don't it? The reason I talk about things like that is this, folks. Everybody listening to me tonight has people who are dying lost. They are dying lost and on their way to a lake of fire. Everybody sitting here tonight has. It may be your co-workers, husband, wife, sons, daughters, mom, dad or whoever it may be, but we all have people who are dying lost. Why would we want to live just to draw attention to ourselves and never be a blessing to anybody? I don't get it.

*14 And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever. And his disciples heard it.*

Do you know what we want to talk about a lot? We can talk about going to heaven and everybody shouts. When we talk about heaven and the streets of gold, everybody rejoices because God is love. God is the God who is lovely and loves to bless people. However, when we look at the other side things, we know that God is a God of love, but God is also a God of justice. What I mean by that is this. God is a very merciful God, but there is a time when the mercy ceases to be. If you don't believe me just ask Noah's generations, or Sodom and Gomorrah, or many other nations around the world that we have been familiar with; but there comes a time when the justice of Almighty God is going to rule and reign. America is going to understand that before long. This world is going to understand before long. We are going to see that.

We want to talk about the love of God. Lord, let me have pretty leaves. Lord, let everybody see me Lord. Let me have pretty leaves. I don't want you to use me and I don't want to take up any of my time to do anything for anybody else, but let me in the lime light. Do you know what we don't want to think about? There is going to come a time when God is going to judge everyone of us; me, you, everybody sitting here tonight, everybody listening tonight; there is going to be a day that you are going to stand before Almighty God in judgment. That is in the book. Do you know what happens here? I mean this. The Bible teaches this, I think.

*14 And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever. And his disciples heard it.*

The disciples are hearing something now a little bit different than what they have heard. If you read this here and you read about—Do you remember the guy that was in Gadera? Do you remember the crazy guy that was over there who screamed and cut himself with stones? Jesus cast the devils out of him and they went into the swine. The swine ran down a steep place and into the sea and they were choked. That particular instance and this instance are the only times that you will find out that Jesus ever dealt with anybody with this kind of severity, with the swine and the tree. Let's remember something. He understands and He knows what He is doing. He can see past the leaves. We don't look for that much anymore. We see leaves and we automatically think that people are Christians. When people talk the talk we automatically think that they must be Christians. When they say "Well, I go to church. I belong to this church or I belong to that." We automatically think that the pretty leaves are there; therefore they must be a Christian.

Listen. Going to heaven is going to take more than leaves. Truth? It absolutely is.

*15 And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves;*

Therefore, He curses the tree here. If you read **Matthew 21:19**; the tree dries up.

*19 And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever. And presently the fig tree withered away.*

So He comes into Jerusalem. He comes into town. When gets to town, He goes into the temple. He goes right back to the place where He has went the night before. He went in, looks around and sees what all is going on and there is no doubt that it broke His heart. It was like someone was tearing His insides out. However, He goes right back to the same place. The temple was a big area. It covered several acres. They had different courts. There was a court for the Gentiles, a court for the women, and all kinds of different courts in it. Then there was the inner part of the temple where the Holy of Holies was at.

When you read this here, Jesus goes into the court of Gentiles. It was a big open area where people would come. If you were a Gentile, this was as far as you could go was into the court of the Gentiles. You couldn't go into the other parts of the temple area. You could go into the court of the Gentiles. If you were not a Jew, you could not go in. However, you could get into the court of the Gentiles and people would come in there. Prostilytes would come in there and different people from around the world; they would come in there and it was a place that they could come and worship. Jesus goes into the court of the Gentiles here.

*15 And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves;*

If you remember, three years before this, in John chapter 2, in the beginning of His public ministry; Jesus did this one more time.

## **John 2**

*14 And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:*

*15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;*

He goes in and He runs out the people. What happened was this. People had set up shops right inside the temple area, right inside the court of the Gentiles where people were supposed to be worshipping Almighty God, but they had set booths and shops right inside the temple area.

You might say, "What's so bad about that?" Here is what's so bad about that. The Bible says here that He cast out them that bought and sold in the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers and them that sold doves. People would come from all over the known world then. They would come to Jerusalem to worship, especially during this time of Passover, they would come to

worship. As we have been reading in our lesson there were different things that they were required to bring. Instead of people bring their offerings maybe for hundreds of miles or whatever it was; they could come to the temple and they could buy it, or come to Jerusalem and buy them. They should not have been buying them in the temple. However, that is what they were doing inside the temple area. They had set up shops where they were selling animals. Not only that but if you come from a different area of the world and you would come with your currency, you could trade or exchange your money for Jewish money. Of course, they would charge you a fee for that. They had that shop set up right inside the temple area. Not only that but they were selling doves. As you read what is going on here, the chief priest, and the people that should have been the custodians of the Law of Almighty God, the priests and all those who were there; they should have been keeping things clean. However, they set up a business right inside the temple area. They were selling animals. They were dealing with their monies. They were selling doves. They were doing that right inside the temple area.

You might say, "What is so bad about that?"

If you come in church tonight and you come here really wanting to worship Almighty God, but there are sheep in this corner over here. We have birds and doves in this corner back here. We had people on this side over here jingling and jangling money and switching money and coins and all that. I don't think that you could do much worshipping. I don't think you could focus much on worshipping Almighty God when you hear animals braying and all the waste they were producing right inside the area where they should be worshipping, where people should have been able to come and put all that on the outside and worship Almighty God. They should have been praying in here. That is what this area was for, but do you know what they were doing? They had made it a place of merchandise. They made it a place that they were getting rich, the chief priest was and others who were involved in businesses that were inside of there. They made themselves very rich.

It is sad today that we see what is going on.

*16 And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.*

That doesn't make much sense when you think about it. The temple area was a big area and they had different gates on different sides of it. If you were on the east side wanting to go to the west side; do you know what they would do? They would just take a shortcut. They would walk through the temple area carrying whatever they were carrying. Instead of going around the temple as they should have so that people could have been able to worship. It should have been a place of *quietness* where people could *communicate* with *Almighty God*. People would bring their wagons. People would bring their carts. They just made a road right through the temple area. Do you know what Jesus did? He stopped that.

We are blessed here. For the majority of people, we respect this as being the house of God. You can say, "It's just a building." It is just a building. You are exactly right. However, this building has been dedicated for the worship of Almighty God. This is a very sacred place. Whether we are cleaning, having play practice, worshipping, or whether the kids are putting on a play or whatever it is; this is the

house of Almighty God. If I am down here at three o'clock in the morning, it is still yet the house of Almighty God. If I can see the mice run through the floor—I haven't seen any, I'm just saying that—it is still yet the house of Almighty God. We need to respect it as that. We should not want to take advantage of anything or anybody having to do with the house and the people of Almighty God. Should we?

What they were doing here is they were making themselves rich. They forgot about worshiping God a long time ago. It had become a business to the church leaders, the chief priest and the scribes. It became a business to them. They were more interested in getting people's money than they were people worshiping Almighty God. Even though the services they were offering were good and was something that was need, it had no place being in the temple area of Almighty God. It should have been on the outside. It should have been done somewhere else. However, they were doing it on the inside. There is no doubt in my mind that when Jesus saw what was going on here—Of course, He knows all things; He knew what was going on—but being able to see what was going on here had to break His heart.

I have been in places before where they treat the house of God like a borrowed mule. What that means is that they just tear it up, throw stuff on the floor, and have no concern about trying to keep it clean. They just have no concern about it whatsoever. Do you know what has happened? They forgot about the house of God being a place of worship. It is a place where people are to come without hearing sheep braying, money rattling, and not seeing people come through with carts. It is a place of worship. It is a place where we can come and put everything else on the outside and simply worship Almighty God and to praise Him for how good He has been to us. That is what church is all about.

Here some time ago—somebody did not like this and I don't mean this in a bad way, but I don't really care. A short time ago, we had some people come in carrying a cup of coffee. Some of you may have not known it. I know these people did not know. I understand that. Probably where these people went to church they probably sat on the pews and drank coffee. I came up and took the cup out of the person's hand and said, "I'm not trying to be mean here, but your coffee will be in the fellowship hall when you get done here." You might say, "What is wrong with drinking coffee." If we are going to have coffee and doughnuts, then let's just have it at the house. If we are just going to come to church to drink coffee and eat doughnuts then why are we wasting our time?

That may get a little close to us sometimes and sometimes we may not understand that. However, this is a holy place. This is not a place for us to do business. This is not a place for us to do business as usual. This is a holy place. Some people come here to worship Almighty God. Unsaved comes to get saved. When we are acting like they act and when they get distracted because of all the racket that we create sometimes—I'm not talking about the kids now. Kids will be kids. We can deal with kids. However, it concerns me sometimes when people leaves here and says, "If I ever come back, I'm going to sit somewhere else." That concerns me. "...because the people I sat beside of couldn't keep their mouth shut. All they talked about was just gossip." That concerns me. When unsaved people tell me that, it concerns me. It should concern you. It doesn't some of us, but it should. The house of God is a holy place. We come here to worship.

Not only did He turn over the money changers tables and cast them out; that bought and sold and so forth.

*17 And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.*

Jesus testified and said that about those people in the temple at Jerusalem. He said, "My house should be a house of prayer for all nations." That is what it says in the original. Every nation under the sun should be able to come to my house and pray. That is what He is saying. However, He looks at these guys and says, "You guys have made it a den of thieves." Do you know what a den of thieves is? It is a hideout is what it is. It is a place where thieves, after they steal what they are going to steal, they go and they hide. The thieves were hiding in the temple. They were hiding right in the place where people should have been worshiping Almighty God.

It is sad to say all across our nation today that we have many thieves who are hiding in the church. We have many thieves who are hiding there. People, that all they want is your money. So many people were trying to make merchandise out of people, to try to use people. You might say, "I don't know anything about that." I could tell you some stories right here in this area, about a hollering distance away in this area of what some people have done to church people; stole them blind. They did not care about anything except getting what they could get.

Jesus said you guys have made it a den a thieves; right in the place where people should have been able to come and worship Almighty God. They should have been able to come here and pray. However, they couldn't even get in the place; probably because of all the racquet, all of the dust, all the animal waste and everything that was there. It was filthy and polluted place. It was a place that God intended to be beautiful, a place that God intended to be clean, and a place that God intended to be a place where people from all nations could come, pray and worship Him. Now it was polluted. Do you know why? It was because people had forgotten about worshiping Almighty God. That was the farthest thing from their minds was worshiping Almighty God.

Listen. I'm not trying to be mean or critical or anything like that. However, if you have any other motives, if you have any other ideas; if our goal is to promote self, if our goal is just to take advantage of people then go somewhere else. Find someplace else to go. This place, with everything that is in me, as long as I have breath, as long as I am here; we are going to do everything that we can to keep this place holy. Keep the thieves on the outside. Keep the goats, the sheep and the money changers on the outside. Keep this place a place where people can come and hear the Word of God preached and taught. Where they can come to an altar and pray without being distracted. What's wrong with that? Not a thing. I know that we are going to do that because I have confidence in you. I may have acted like I'm mad, but I'm not mad. I got over that a long time ago. I'm getting too old to get mad. I can't fight anymore and I sure can't run. Just kidding!

Let's live as we should live. Let's be more than just leaves on a tree. Let's have some fruit there. When we come to the house of God, we will have something to offer God and it will be something that God will accept and will be pleasing to Him.