

Mark Study
Week Sixteen
Mark 11:1-26

Day One

1 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, 2 saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 3 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.' "

vs. 1&2 – We now look at what is known as the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Notice that Jesus planned His own parade into Jerusalem; no one planned it for Him. I have often said that people seldom honor any great person while that person is still alive. They only build you memorials once you're gone. I am not saying that Jesus was seeking honor for Himself; He was not. He was simply fulfilling Scripture and actually giving a practical, public example of His humility.

So Jesus sent the disciples ahead to secure transport for Him. He could have had the best horse or fanciest carriage, but instead He chose a young donkey. What's more, He chose a donkey that had never been ridden! I would think that an untrained donkey who was ridden for the first time would do one of two things: either not go anywhere or try to throw the rider! Yet that is what Jesus wanted to ride.

And how did Jesus know that the donkey would be there? Was this a manifestation of His divinity or was it a "word of knowledge," a spiritual gift of the Spirit that allows people to know something only through supernatural means?

v. 3 – Jesus was asking His disciples to borrow someone's donkey, without the owner's permission! If anyone inquired as to what they were doing, they were to put the responsibility on the Lord. Here is another subtle example of Jesus indicating that He was God. While some would think the Lord in heaven was the One who needed the donkey's services, it was really the Lord walking among them who needed it.

This took great faith on the part of the two disciples. First, they had to believe that the colt would be where Jesus said it was and that they would select the correct one. Then they had to trust that the owner would understand and not accuse them of stealing.

What is the Lord telling you to do that requires faith-filled obedience? Why are you hesitant? Are you concerned about what others will think? Are you fearful it won't turn out as you the Lord promised or as you would like? What is holding you back?

Day Two

4 They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, 5 some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" 6 They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. 7 When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it.

v. 4 – It always happens as the Lord has directed! The disciples went and, sure enough, there was a donkey right where Jesus had promised it would be. One thing about God; He is very smart! He can be counted on to be accurate and fulfill His promises:

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it (Isaiah 55:10-11).

Are you putting your complete trust in God and His word? Where are you weak and how can you improve?

v. 5 – Sure enough, the people who were close by questioned what the disciples were doing. God prepares for every contingency and can be counted on to be thorough. I have pointed out that God is a great administrator, the best I have ever worked with. He is always on time, plans well in advance and takes care of all the details.

That is why I don't understand people who say that God is all creative, and that the Spirit only works spontaneously and on the spur of the moment. God's creation is orderly. We know what time the sun will rise and set. We can predict the weather with some measure of accuracy. That is as much of who God is as His creative side. Don't be biased against organization and, if you are organized, don't despise creativity and spontaneity. We need them both and they are both spiritual, both aspects of who God is.

v. 6 – The people confronted the disciples to see why they were taking the donkey. They told those bystanders what Jesus had said and so they let the disciples proceed. **I wonder how many times I didn't get what I needed because I was afraid and didn't ask? Or I asked but with wrong motives? How about you?**

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures (James 4:1-3).

v. 7 – If you sit on a donkey without a saddle, the donkey hair can be uncomfortable. So the disciples gave Jesus an impromptu saddle and He got on. We have no other record of Jesus traveling any other way but walking, so this is a first. And it was done to fulfill Scripture. He did not enter Jerusalem on a white stallion or black super horse. He entered on a donkey, the transport of a poor person.

Plus, I don't think I would want to use my cloak right away after someone has been sitting on it while riding a donkey. It would need a good wash to get the animal smell out of it. That's how it is sometimes with your possessions. When God wants to use them or have you use them to help other people, they can come back to you not quite the same as when they left. I've loaned books, tools and other possessions to my fellow believers, only to have them returned in less than ideal condition. Remember, your stuff doesn't own you, so what difference should it make?

Day Three

8 Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. 9 Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" 10 "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest!" 11 Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

v. 8 – Why would someone spread their cloak on the road for a donkey to step on, especially since you would never know what deposit the donkey may leave on your garment? What is the symbolism of the cloaks and the branches being spread on the road?

Obviously, it was a symbol of honor so that the rider's mount would not have to touch the dirt. Modern parades find people throwing confetti as a means of celebration and honor for those in the parade. I would imagine the practices in these verses were the same.

Yet what were the people celebrating? They were celebrating the fact that a special man, perhaps a prophet and even their Messiah, was coming to His holy city, Jerusalem. It is interesting to me that the common people had more sense and spiritual insight than their leaders. Don't ever dismiss what you sense or see because you aren't in leadership. You may know and see more than those who are supposedly over you. After all, remember what John wrote:

As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit ? just as it has taught you, remain in him (1 John 2:27).

If teachers are one of the ministry gifts as described in Ephesians 4:11, why would there be no need for teachers? It's because there are times when God shows you something Himself; it didn't come from any human.

v. 9 – The people were all shouting, "Hosanna!" This literally means, "Save us now!" The crowd acknowledged their need for God's help. They also recognized that Jesus was sent by God to provide some measure of salvation for them, although most did not understand the kind of salvation Jesus brought. They were still thinking in terms of

political freedom from Rome. Jesus had come, however, to give them freedom from the bondage of sin.

v. 10 – This verse indicates that the people were indeed thinking of a political salvation, for they referenced King David’s kingdom. The expectation was that a literal king would be installed and would rule just like David did, only with more effectiveness and permanence. The people still wanted a king after the fashion of the other nations, while God was giving them a king whose kingdom was not of this world.

I have lived long enough to know that politics and spirituality don’t mix. I’m not saying that Christians should not be involved in politics. They should vote and even run for political office. But they should then do their job in a righteous manner without mixing church and government. Those two entities are totally unrelated and separate, with different skills and objectives. **Do you agree with me or not? Why or why not?** Yet people continue to want to mix the two together, like the people were doing here. Jesus resisted their efforts to make Him a political figure.

v. 11 – Jesus came to the Temple late in the day, so He did a quick tour and then left for Bethany, where He was to stay the night. Not only did Jesus enter Jerusalem on a donkey but He also came in after the crowds had subsided late in the day. Jesus was never one to make a big spectacle, as we have consistently seen.

Day Four

12 The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. 13 Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. 14 Then he said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard him say it.

v. 12 – **I wonder why Jesus left the house where He was staying hungry? Didn’t his hosts provide breakfast? Or had they lingered in Bethany and, when they left, He was hungry since He had not eaten in a while?**

I guess the main point is that Jesus was indeed human. He got hungry, just like you and I do. We cannot go very long without food and Jesus was the same. He was like us in every way except sin. That should encourage us, for Jesus can identify with our human experience and dilemma from firsthand experience.

For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted (Hebrews 2:16-18).

v. 13 – This is a bit confusing, for Jesus went looking for figs when it wasn’t the season for figs. **Why would He then curse the tree, when it wasn’t the trees fault that it**

could not produce fruit? It was simply following the seasons as God had established them.

This seems unfair until you examine this in the context of what Jesus was about to do and where He was going. He was heading to Jerusalem, a city that appeared to be so holy and spiritual, busy at that time doing God's will, just like that fig tree looked all green and fruitful. Yet the appearances of the tree and Jerusalem were deceptive, for while they looked healthy, they were unfruitful. This was unacceptable to God and He was going to do something about it. He was going to curse Jerusalem for its leafy appearance, but lack of godly fruit.

Does this make sense? Remember, you must always examine stories and verses in the context in which they are found. I think without the context, this story of the fig tree makes Jesus look arbitrary and whimsical as He curses a fruit tree for no fruit when it was not the season for fruit.

Later Jesus also pointed out that when He cursed the tree, He was giving the disciples an example of their spiritual power and authority that He had given them. More on that later.

v. 14 – Jesus promised that no one would ever eat fruit from that tree again. **Do you have that same kind of power?** Later Jesus indicated that you do. Our words coupled with faith can achieve great things. As I write, I am reading Proverbs 10. Look at what that chapter has to say about speech and the tongue:

The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked (Proverbs 10:11).

The tongue of the righteous is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is of little value (Proverbs 10:20).

The lips of the righteous nourish many, but fools die for lack of judgment (Proverbs 10:21).

The lips of the righteous know what is fitting, but the mouth of the wicked only what is perverse (Proverbx 10:32).

Are you using your tongue in a way that maximizes its power and capabilities?

Day Five

15 On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, 16 and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. 17 And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: " 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it 'a den of

robbers." 18 The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

vs. 15&16 – Jesus had come late in the day on the previous day, but today He came when what He did would be seen by as many people as possible. He was angry and started driving the people away from the Temple. In a sense, Jesus examined the Temple like He had examined the fig tree and He was angry at what He saw!

People came from all over the world to the Temple, so there were conveniently placed money changers there to help them exchange their currency for local. Then of course there were those who would sell the visitors animals for the sacrifices, since they could not bring their sacrifices the long distances that they had traveled to get there. This seemed reasonable, just like it was reasonable for the fig tree to not have fruit.

Yet God’s perspective isn’t man’s, and Jesus didn’t like what He saw. **What have you and I gotten accustomed to seeing that seems reasonable to us but is abhorrent to God? I think we should ask Him that question, don’t you?**

It was easier and shorter for those carrying merchandise to cut through the area where Jesus was, so they just did it, without giving it a second thought.

v. 17 – Jesus quoted Isaiah 56:7 when He referred to the Temple being a house of prayer. The Temple had long before lost its focus and was now a place of business and not a focus of spiritual activity. Jesus was angry! Yet, re-read the verse and it says, “As he taught them.” Jesus once again turned the situation into a teaching opportunity. Even when He was agitated, Jesus gave His life to teach and train His followers. Lord, help me! When I am agitated, the last thing I want is to be with people to teach them. Yet Jesus was able to do so.

I think of this verse from Proverbs when I think of this scenario:

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city (Proverbs 16:32 NASU).

Are you ruling your spirit? Do you stay focused even in the midst of personal problems or unpleasantness? I am so moved by this today and I want to set some character goals that will help me be more controlled and less volatile. To be that, I will need the Spirit’s help. How about you?

v. 18 – Here we have a *wow 13*. The people were amazed at Jesus’ teaching. Yet this caused the leaders to fear Him and, consequently, to plot His death. Leadership isn’t something you hold onto at all costs; it is something that is given by God. These leaders felt they had a position to protect; if you don’t own your position, you don’t have to fight to keep it. I want to again point out that the people were more spiritual than the leaders. They had a better assessment of who Jesus was than their rulers. Just because someone is

a leader doesn't mean that they are smarter or more spiritual than the people they lead, although that is what we often want and expect from our leaders.

When leaders think they are smarter or better than their followers, they can become arrogant and autocratic, as evidenced by this comment made to the man born blind whom Jesus healed:

To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out (John 9:34).

Day Six

19 When evening came, they went out of the city. 20 In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. 21 Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!" 22 "Have faith in God," Jesus answered.

v. 19 – Jesus spent the day in Jerusalem and then had to return to Bethany where He was staying. The city was full of pilgrims for the feast and I'm sure all the available rooms were filled. This is just how Jesus came into the world, his parents having to travel to Bethlehem, only to find that there were no rooms. Serving God doesn't assure convenience or comfort, but it does insure eternal life, which I suppose is the ultimate comfort.

v. 20 – The next day, the disciples and Jesus were heading back into Jerusalem when they saw the fig tree from the previous day. Lo and behold, it was withered from the roots up after Jesus had cursed it! The disciples were shocked at the tangible, immediate evidence of what Jesus said and did to that tree. Peter was the one who spoke up because he remembered what Jesus had said to the tree. Good old Peter, he was almost always the first to figure out what was going on and then to speak about it.

Yet his surprise at the condition of the tree is evident. I would have been surprised, too. I often pray but I don't often really expect to see any immediate answers like that. But this example should be the norm and not the exception. If it doesn't happen, it's not because of God, it's because of my lack of faith.

v. 21 – Jesus exhorted them to have faith in God. They did not truly believe that they had the power or authority to bring about changes or create new scenarios. As we saw yesterday, the book of Proverbs gives us a lot of insight into the power of the tongue and Jesus taught us about the power of faith. So it is critical what we say and pray. Let's review some of these verses and then determine what changes you will make in the way you speak.

Day Seven

23 "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. 24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. 25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

vs. 23&24 – I don't think Jesus was encouraging them to have mountain-throwing competitions with their faith. He was urging them not to be intimidated by the size of the problems they would face. Here once again, Jesus had to assure them He was telling the truth because the truth sounded so untrue. The power of faith, which you cannot see, over the realm that you can see is staggering, yet we have not tapped into this dynamic, or at least I have not.

Whether it's sickness, financial need, or broken relationships, they all are subject to our faith commands. The problem isn't the size of the problem, but rather the size of my faith. **Do you think this is spiritual mumbo-jumbo or doubletalk? Believe it is already happened and it will happen? Then why doesn't that truth appear more often?**

Does this mean if we ask for something and believe we have received it that we should not ask again? I think that is true. When you order something online, you believe you are going to receive it. You don't go back online and order the same thing every day until the first one arrives. You don't call everyday to check on the progress. You believe that it's on the way and you trust. You anticipate its arrival but don't question the integrity of the process.

If I am reading this correctly, this is how we should pray. We should ask until it's settled in our hearts that we have received it and then stop praying about it, except to give thanks for it. When we get to the point that we can thank God for what we are praying for, then we can move on; the faith process is finished.

How will this truth affect your prayer life? Will it change at all?

v. 25 – Ah, so another barrier to answered prayer is unforgiveness. Otherwise, why would Jesus raise this subject in this context? If you have unforgiveness, then you will not have your sins forgiven by God. So it is important that you keep short accounts in regards to your relationships with other people.

Is there anyone you need to forgive? I have found that sometimes we must forgive the same person more than once, for there are levels of hurt and pain that surface over time. One man said forgiveness can be like peeling an onion; you do it one layer at a time. Don't assume there is no one; ask God to show you if there is anyone. If you think of anyone, don't argue, just forgive. They aren't worth impeding your answers to prayer.