A BETTER WORD

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

A Study Through the Life of King Jesus | with Pastor Nick Gatzke

A Living Corpse

◆ *Mark 11:12–25*

THE BIG IDEA

Something can look alive on the outside and be dead on the inside: only real fruit, grown from faith and prayer, proves otherwise.

SERMON SUMMARY

On the way into Jerusalem, Jesus cursed a fruitless fig tree in full leaf. He then entered the temple and drove out the money changers, quoting Isaiah and Jeremiah: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations, but you have made it a den of robbers." Mark wraps the fig tree story around the temple scene because one is a living parable of the other. The fig tree had withered to its roots, and within a generation the temple itself would fall.

The warning about bearing fruit extends to churches and individuals alike. A church can have lively music and a packed room while quietly decaying from a lack of gospel, teaching, and prayer. When Peter marveled that the fig tree withered, Jesus responded with teaching on faith, prayer, and forgiveness. Jesus himself becomes the true meeting place with God, and believers, as his temple (Ephesians 2; 1 Corinthians 6), show that same evidence: a fruitful life of faith-filled prayer.

DIGGING DEEPER

OBSERVATION

1. Verse 13 says Jesus found the fig tree "in leaf" but with nothing on it, since "it was not the season for figs." What made this tree's leafy appearance deceptive rather than merely out of season?

INTERPRETATION

2. Jesus cursed the fig tree, cleansed the temple, and the disciples found it withered the next morning (vv.12–20). What is Mark's gospel teach us by linking the temple scene and the fig tree story, and what does that tell you about the temple?
3. Jesus quoted Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11: "house of prayer for all nations" turned "den of robbers." What does that specific accusation reveal about what had actually gone wrong at the temple?

THEOLOGICAL CONNECTION

4. Jesus responded to the withered fig tree not with more judgment but with teaching on faith, prayer, and forgiveness (vv.22–25). Why connect "have faith … forgive" so directly to a tree that died for lack of fruit?

5. Ephesians 2:19–22 and 1 Corinthians 6:19 say believers are now God's temple. If the sign of a healthy temple is fruit, faith expressed in prayer and forgiveness, what would an honest look at your own life reveal right now?

LIVING IT OUT

HEART CHECK

A church or a life can look impressively alive, full calendar, packed room, strong finances, while quietly dying inside for lack of real prayer. Where are you relying on appearance rather than substance?

ACTION STEPS

— Take an honest look at one area of your life that looks fruitful on the outside, and ask whether real fruit, faith, prayer, forgiveness, are actually there.

— Identify one relationship where you're holding on to an unresolved offense, and practice the forgiveness Jesus ties to prayer in verse 25. Go to that person, or release it to God in prayer.

"SO WHAT?" CHALLENGE

> ***A fruitless life can look alive for a season, but Jesus is still walking by, looking for fruit. Let prayer and forgiveness prove you're alive in him.***

REFLECTION & PRAYER

KEY VERSE — TO MEMORIZE

"Have faith in God … whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."

— Mark 11:22, 24

PRAYER PROMPT

Ask God to reveal whether your life is bearing real fruit or just green leaves, and to grow dependent prayer and quick forgiveness in you.

YOUR PRAYER