Mark 11:12-24

Count Your Figs

I. Slide#1 Announce:
   A. Come out to hear John Gotz this Wed night.
   B. Slide#2 Children at Risk - Harrison House: is a SafeHouse in Thousand Palms & is a Transitionary Shelter for youth in crisis. Young adults ages 8-24 who are homeless, exploited, or have aged out of the system. We adopted a 2 bed apt. Wedding registry at Target. Out of 120 items needed, we only have 30 left. We’ve extended till Wed.
   C. Slide#3,4 Congrats to Kel for putting up with me for 30 years Tuesday :)

II. Slide#5 Intro:
   A. A living parable (a good parable sneaks up on u). Our Lord had just come from His triumphal entry, proclaimed as King by the multitude. Jesus knew their shallow adoration would soon turn into cries for His death.
      1. He will point out their hypocritical fruitlessness, their lack of faith, and unveil why their prayers were being hindered.
   B. Often OT prophets acted out their message when words no longer worked[c19 pottery over head;27 yoke]
      1. This whole episode was a sermon in action.
   C. Slide#6 Title: Count Your Figs
   D. Outline: Figs & Fraud - Faith & Forgiveness.

III. Slide#7 FIGS (12-14)
   A. The day/Mon. Morning. The Place/Left Bethany/towards Jer.
   B. Slide#8 POOR FIG TREE
   C. If He had power to kill the tree, why didn’t he use that power to have tree produce figs?
      1. The cursing of the fig tree, & the drowning of the pigs, are the only times where He used His miraculous power to destroy something in nature.
   D. Is Jesus acting like a spoiled child who didn’t get his way?
   E. Why would Jesus blast an innocent tree simply because it was fruitless?
      1. A: If a tree is part of what we call lower creation & is there for our use then where is Jesus' wrong doing?
         a) If the herd of swine was turned into pork sausage, we’d think how nicely they fulfilled their destiny. But sacrifice them for the salvation for a poor lunatic’s soul… & it’s down right shocking.
      2. A: If the fig tree continued to be fruitless, & someone cut it down for fire wood…no one would have a problem.
   F. So the answer lies in the fact that He is teaching an eternal spiritual lesson w/a visual parable.
G. **So in actuality, Jesus makes this a very honored tree, right up next to the tree used to make His cross. – For, from this tree many have been warned & helped from its lessons.**

H. Slide#9 **PECULIAR FIG TREE**
I. It has the unusual characteristic of producing its fruit before its leaves.
J. It produces leaves in March/April. Fruit not until June; another crop in Aug; & possibly a 3rd crop in December.
   1. It’s possible then that though it wasn’t the “season for fruit” there could be left over fruit from the previous season.

K. There maybe many leaves that people admire in you, but is there fruit people can enjoy?

L. Slide#10 **FIGURATIVE FIG TREE**
M. The Fig Trees represented what in the OT? (Israel)
   1. Hosea 9:10 I found Israel Like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstfruits on the fig tree in its first season.

N. Many people believe they will escape the judgment of God simply because they burst forth w/ religious leaves. How can this passage serve as a warning to them?

O. Slide#11 **INSTRUCTIONAL FIG TREE**
P. Israel had nothing but leaves.
Q. The Fig Tree pictures Israel, taking up space but not producing fruit.
R. The Parable of the Fig Tree in Luke give an example of this. (Lk.13:6-9)
S. Jesus is still seeking fruit from His people. To Be fruitless is sin.
   1. Jn.15:16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain.

T. Slide#12 **Fruit? – But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.**
   1. Fruit also includes: [1] Rt Character (Christlike character) [2] Rt Character will result in Rt Conduct (a life characterized by good works) [3] A faithful witness [4] Lips that praise God (5) A generous giving of one’s money (brings fruit to our account)

U. Don’t settle for shiny leaves. And, don’t try to cover your spiritual nakedness with religious Fig Leaves.

V. Looking for fruit on the fig tree represents what Jesus was looking for in the Temple, & what Jesus is looking for in your Temple. **Count Your Figs!**

IV. Slide#13 **FRAUD (15-19)**
A. “The trouble w/righteous anger is that it is so much easier to be angry than righteous.”
1. But it is possible to be both.

B. Slide#14 SHEKEL CONVERTERS (15a)

C. This all took place in the court of the Gentiles (only place where gentiles were allowed)

D. Jesus should have found prayer & worship there…not a noisy market place.

E. Jesus had cleansed the Temple in the beg of His ministry in Jn. 2 at His 1st Passover visit.

F. Temple Tax was paid annually w/the Jewish silver ½ shekel.
   1. So people had to exchange their Greek & Roman money which became a lucrative, dirty business.
   2. “Instead of a place for praying, it became a place for preying & paying!” (www)

G. Slide#15,16 DOVE TRAFFICKERS (15b)

H. Doves – were an offering for the poor.

I. Its what Jesus’ parents brought at His own baby dedication at the Temple.

J. Barclay said, “Outside doves cost as little as 3 ½ pence a pair, inside they were as much as 75 pence a pair.”

K. I think you know how it grieves the heart of our Lord to take advantage of the poor.
   1. Prov.22:22,23 Do not rob the poor because he is poor, Nor oppress the afflicted at the gate; For the LORD will plead their cause, And plunder the soul of those who plunder them.

L. This seemed to be the County Fair & the Stock Exchange all rolled into one.

M. Slide#17 SHAMEFUL SHORTCUTS (16)

N. They were using the temple mount for a shortcut from one side of the city to the other.

O. Slide#18 ROBBERS IN GOD’S LIVING ROOM (17)

P. His House was for the tithe, the sacrifice, prayer, outreach, worship, teaching, healing, & purification...to name a few.
   1. Def of worship by Archbishop William Temple: To quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, To feed the mind w/the truth of God, To purge the imagination by the beauty of God, To open the heart to the love of God, To devote the will to the purpose of God.

Q. A Den of Thieves is what? - A place where thieves hide after they’ve committed their crimes.
   1. The Jews were using the temple ceremonies to cover up their secret sins.

R. “The Temple can only give sanctuary AS a Sanctuary.” Derek Kidner
   1. When man takes over…God leaves.

S. Note the Digression:
   1. Slide#19a Mt.21:13 (My house) My house shall be called a house of prayer,
   2. Slide#19b Mt.23:38 (your house) See! Your house is left to you desolate.
3. Slide#19c Mt.24:2 (No house) Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.
   a) My house, Your house, No house.

T. Jesse James killed a fellow in a bank robbery and shortly thereafter was baptized in the Kearney Baptist Church. Then he killed another man, a bank cashier, and joined the church choir and taught hymn-singing. He liked Sundays, Jesse did, but he couldn't always show up at church…on 2 Sundays, he robbed trains.

U. Do we as church members flee to church on Sundays in an attempt to cover up our sins? Do we “go to church” in order to maintain our reputation, or to worship & glorify God? If Jesus showed up today in our church what changes would he make? If Jesus showed up today in our personal temple (body) what changes would he make?

V. Slide#20 FAITH (20-24)
A. The day/Tues. Morning. The Place/Left Jerusalem back towards Bethany.
B. Slide#21,22 (20b) When we stop bearing fruit, the problem always starts w/the roots.
   1. When a person dries up spiritually it is usually from the roots.
      a) 2 Kings 19:30 And the remnant who have escaped of the house of Judah Shall again take root downward, And bear fruit upward. NIV take root below and bear fruit above.
   2. This also may speak to the totality of its destruction.
      a) The fig-tree represents the nation of Israel. Its spiritual roots were dead. And it could not produce fruit.

C. (21) Peter was shocked, it had only been 24 hours & it was withered.
D. Jesus indicates 2 aspects of fruit He was looking for: Faith Fruit & Forgiveness Fruit.
   1. Prayer seems to be the link in all of this: see vs.17, 24, 25.
   2. This is a new treatment on prayer that doesn't require a Temple.

E. Slide#23 A Lesson on Faith Fruit
F. He starts with simply…Have faith in God. Or, constantly be trusting God. Or, live in a state of dependence on Him.
   1. Slide#24 Then He adds a very challenging statement…mountain, be removed.
      a) Mountains in Scripture often refers to a great difficulty.
         (1) To all intents & purposes…it is something impossible.
      b) Slide#25 We face mountains of discouragement; mountains of opposition; mountains of business difficulties; mountains of an unstable economy; mountains of marital squabbles.
      c) We can move these mountains only by trusting God.

G. (24) Now He says the same, just a little more concise.
1. Whatever this believe that you receive them ultimately means, we know that to not do it is one of the greatest hindrances to prayer.

2. Do you think that the larger percentage of limitations to prayer is because of us, or God? (Sure, He limits when it is not His will; but we may limit by not praying; asking amiss i.e. w/wrong motives.

3. Slide#26 “The beginning of anxiety is the end of faith, & the beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety.” George Muller

H. So is this a blanket promise in vs.24?

1. Is this the only lesson on prayer in the NT?

2. Does this mean that if you pray hard enough & really believe God is obligated to answer you, no matter what you ask?

   a) That’s not faith in God, but faith in faith, or faith in feelings.

3. Slide#27 Faith is not a sense, nor sight, nor reason, but simply taking God at His word¹

   a) I believe God that it will be just as it was told me. Acts 27:25 [Paul re:the sailors safety on board]

VI. Slide#28 FORGIVENESS (25,26)

A. Slide#29 A Lesson on Forgiveness Fruit

B. We must have Faith & Forgiveness when we pray, or God will not answer.

   1. Slide#30 An unforgiving spirit will form a fatal roadblock in our prayer life.

   2. Ps.66:18 If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. (NLT)

C. (26) We do not earn God’s blessing by forgiving one another.

   1. Our forgiving spirit is one evidence that our hearts are right w/God & that we want to obey His will. (ww)

   2. This makes it possible for the Father to hear us & to answer prayer.

D. We’ll grab this last section real quick & add Fib, to Figs & Fraud; Faith & Forgiveness.

VII. Slide#31 FIB (27-33)

A. WHO SAID SO? (27-33)


   1. This was the Sanhedrins right & responsibility to investigate anyone who claimed to be sent by God. - Except...they didn’t have open minds or sincere motives.

C. (28) By what authority means what kind of authority…i.e. human or divine?

D. By what authority was He doing what things? (probably the cleansing of the Temple, day before)

¹ Christmas Evans, born on Dec.25, 1766-1838; Greatest Wales Preacher.
E. Jesus met their question w/a counter question. Was John’s authority from heaven/divine or from man?

1. Jesus often asked questions to get His hearers to think deeply for themselves.

F. (33) They would have been more honest if they said, “we will not tell” instead of “we do not know”. That was their Fib/lie.

1. Slide#32blank Jesus was basically asking, are you prepared to recognize God-given authority when you see it? (clearly they were not!)