

## 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 Transitional 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 word<sup>1</sup>
    - 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)
- B. (27) **The day**/Tues. Afternoon. **The Place**/Back in the Temple court.
  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)

<sup>1</sup> 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!)