

Prayer with Faith and Forgiveness

3

Mark 11:12-25

1. What do you first think of when you hear the word 'fruitfulness'?

2. Read Mark 11:12-25.

3. What was Jesus' response to the state of the fig tree as he passed it (13-14)? Why might he give such a surprising response?

4. What was one of the key purposes of the temple? See 1 Kings 8:27-30, 41-43. What was Jesus' charge against those who ran the temple (15-17)?

5. How did the chief priests and teachers of the law respond, and what were they concerned about (18)?

6. Biblical scholar Ben Witherington writes:

One needs to bear in mind how very important the fig tree was in everyday life in Israel, being the most fruitful of all trees, and as such it was often the tree used to produce the firstfruits to be brought into the temple. Later, at v. 20, we learn that the fig tree is withered all the way from the roots (cf. 4:6), indicating total destruction, presumably a foreshadowing of what would happen to the temple and Jerusalem in a.d. 70. This conclusion is likely supported by 13:28–32, where the fig tree is again a symbol of the end times. (Witherington, The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary)

What might be the meaning of the withering of the fig tree in this passage?

7. If the temple is to be destroyed, what do verses 22-25 imply about where prayer may take place post-temple?

8. When Jesus said “Have faith in God”, did he mean “Have faith that God is capable of doing anything for you.” Or “Have faith that God will do anything for you.”?

9. In verses 23 & 24 Jesus suggests that there can be hindrances to God answering our prayers in the affirmative. (See also Psalm 66:16-20 and James 4:1-3).

In practice, how might we discern carefully why God does not do something for us when we ask?

10. What are the dangers of telling another person that God hasn't answered their prayer because of their sin or lack of faith? Is it ever okay to do this? Discuss.

11. What challenges you the most about prayer?

12. Pray for each other, calling on God's help to overcome these challenges