



MATTHEW

The Savior-King and His Kingdom

The King's Faith!

Matthew 21:18-22

Message #59 of 80 – S1094

Sermon given on April 28, 2024



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

The King's Faith!

Matthew 21:18-22

Opening Comments

- Open your Bibles to **Matthew 21**
- Today, we continue a series through the gospel of Matthew – **The Savior-King and His Kingdom**
- Let's open this time in our service with a word of prayer. - **Pray**

Teaching

- **The King's Faith!**
- Let's start by reading our text for the day.
- **Matthew 21:18-22**
- Taken by itself this seems out of character for Jesus.
- Why would Jesus curse the fig tree just because it did not satisfy His hunger?
- This account is meant to communicate a message.
- First, in context it follows the Triumphal Entry.
- Jesus rides into Jerusalem on the exact date Daniel's prophecy said He would.
- As Jesus rides in people are laying their garments and branches in the road and cried out, "Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Hosanna in the highest!"
- They are declaring that they believe He is the promised Messiah.
- He then goes into the temple and drives out those who have turned God's house of prayer into a 'den of thieves.'"
- Then, Jesus heals everyone who needs His miraculous touch.
- The religious leaders are indignant that Jesus would receive the praise of the multitude and they confront Jesus.
- After challenging them to read their own Scriptures, Jesus leaves for the night.
- We pick up the account on the way back to Jerusalem.
- **Matthew 21:18**
- Why is this account here? Jesus is days away from the cross.
- Why should we care about a fig tree that had no fruit?

- This account is a lesson in the power of faith and the cost of faithlessness.
 - In a short time, Jesus would be gone.
 - He would no longer be there with them.
 - All they would have left is faith.
 - Faith is not restrained by what we see or know.
 - Faith is only restrained by what we believe and what is true.
 - ‘He was hungry.’ This reminds us of Christ’s humanity – he needed to eat.
 - But we also know that He could go without food – forty days in the wilderness temptation.
 - **Matthew 21:19**
 - This seems like an odd response.
 - We need to understand something about fig trees.
 - When a fig tree has leaves it also has fruit. It is possible to pick fruit 9 to 10 months of the year.
 - This is a picture of the fig tree my son planted in the back yard last year. (**Picture: Matthew 21.19 - Fig Tree**)
 - Fruit and leaves appear at the same time.
 - Based on the appearance of the tree, it should have also had fruit on it.
 - Jesus was well-acquainted with how the fig tree bore fruit – they were common in Israel.
 - Mark’s gospel tells us that the time for harvesting figs had not come, so figs should have been present.
 - Jesus condemned the fig tree, not for being barren, but for being false.
 - Jesus’ response to finding the fig tree barren is not a human act of frustration, anger, or vindictiveness.
 - Jesus is using this fig tree as an illustration of the Jewish religious system, including the temple.
 - This was a sign of God’s judgment on Israel for rebellion and disobedience (**Jeremiah 8:13**).
- “I will surely consume them,” says the LORD. “No grapes shall be on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things I have given them shall pass away from them.”

- This account follows the account of the chief priests and scribes challenging Jesus in the temple as the people are responding to His arrival as the Messiah.
 - The religious establishment of the nation of Israel had the appearance of health and fruitfulness, but the closer you get to it the more you could see it was not bearing spiritual fruit.
 - This might also be a parable about what would come upon Israel in 70 AD.
 - The Jews had everything they needed to produce a harvest of righteousness.
 - The barren fig tree is an example of their barrenness.
 - And just as Jesus approached that fig tree looking for fruit, He came to the Jewish religious leaders looking for the fruit of righteousness.
 - And finding none, their fate was to wither away.
 - This is not a lesson just for the Jews.
 - Every church must examine itself for the fruits of righteousness.
 - Is there an emphasis on religion or upon Jesus?
 - Is there holiness, repentance, truth, and growing faith?
 - Is there love and forgiveness?
 - Is grace and mercy given and received?
 - It is not enough to look like a healthy church, there must be fruits of righteousness. (**Douglas O'Donnell**)
 - “...the green leaves of your religious practices cannot cover a fruitless life.”
 - And what is true for the church is true for every believer.
 - Going to church and partaking in Communion or being baptized or serving in or giving to the church is not the fruit of righteousness.
 - All of that is religion.
 - We might appear fruitful to those around us but God sees the real us (**Hebrews 4:13**).
- And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.**
- The fruit of righteousness is the evidence that the Holy Spirit is dwelling within you.
 - If He is there will be fruit, spiritual fruit (**Galatians 5:22-23a**).
- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control.**

- Acting like a Christian but lacking the spiritual fruit of righteousness is hypocrisy and God hates hypocrisy.
- The disciples are right there, and they are blown away.
- **Matthew 21:20-22**
- Jesus takes this as an opportunity to talk to them about faith.
- ‘if you have faith and do not doubt’ – What is faith?
- If you are able, please stand up.
- Now look around, can you see faith? No!
- You can see people who may or may not have faith.
- Go ahead and sit down.
- I am guessing that most of you didn’t think about the chair before you sat down.
- You believed it was there and you trusted it to hold your weight as you say upon it.
- You had knowledge of the chair’s presence and experience sitting in chairs. That is a kind of faith!
- Faith in God is similar.
- Faith must be based upon knowledge of who God is – His character, nature, will, Word, and ways.
- We get to know Him through His Word.
- As we walk with God, we experience His presence, love, grace, mercy, holiness, and everything else that is Him.
- And the better we get to know Him, the more we can trust Him.
- And we can even grow to the point where we trust Him implicitly, like the way you trusted the chair – you just do it.
- Jesus says that if you have faith, you can move mountains.
- Now, let me ask you, have you ever heard of someone moving mountains? No, me neither.
- Is it possible that no one in the last two thousand years has had the kind of faith that Jesus is talking about? I don’t think so.
- Humanly speaking, moving a mountain just by telling it to move is impossible.
- In fact, it might be one of the most impossible things we can think of.
- Jesus is making a spiritual point here.

- The disciples Jesus was speaking to were going to go on and do the same kinds of miraculous thing Jesus did.
- Each one of them was impossible.
- How did they do it – by faith – by mountain-moving faith.
- The religious people of Jesus’ time had false faith, it was all leaves and no fruit.
- It looked good on the outside, but it was corrupt on the inside ([Matthew 23:27](#)).

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men’s* bones and all uncleanness.

- Jesus, their Messiah was there, and they didn’t believe.
- As Christ-followers, mountain-sized challenges and trials are going to come our way.
- And the question we must answer for ourselves, will we believe?
- Will we trust God for everything – the big things and the small?
- We may not be able to move mountains ourselves, but our God, who made the mountains and holds the universe in His hands can.
- If you are facing a mountain, or even a smallish hill, take it to God.
- True faith knows God and believes in God.
- The Bible is filled with examples of God doing impossible things for His people.
- If there is an impossible, mountain-sized thing in your life, take to the God who the word impossible has no meaning.
- Take it to God in prayer. But if you do, believe (**James 1:6-8**).

But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

- Jesus tells us in very plain language that if we trust God with real faith, we can trust that He will hear our prayers and will answer them.
- Let’s do that right now. Lift up your mountain to the Lord in prayer.
- **Pray!** Worship Team plays the last song!