

FIG LEAVES

TEXT:

Mark 11:12-14: Jesus entered Jerusalem

12 And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, He was hungry:

13 And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, He came, if haply He might find anything thereon: and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.

14 And Jesus answered and said unto it, "No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever." And His disciples heard it.



Background:

On this particular morning, Jesus was on His way from Bethany to Jerusalem, a journey of less than a mile.

He stayed at Bethany each of the six nights before His betrayal. He loved the quiet little town. His good friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, lived there. Simon the Leper's home was there, and Jesus enjoyed visiting with him. In this little village, Jesus had brief retreats into a more private life.

Bethany was located at the Mount of Olives on the main road from Jericho to Jerusalem. Tourists go there today — the town is called Azariyeh. The houses of Lazarus and Simon, along with the tomb from which our Lord called Lazarus, were there. Many olive and fig trees are still in this area.

Introduction:

As Jesus walked along the road with His disciples, they became hungry. They saw an unusually welcome sight: a fig tree covered with leaves. It was spring, and figs usually ripen in mid-summer. But a few early varieties bore in April, and also sometimes in a mild winter. A tree in a sheltered spot protected by the Olivet itself would retain some fruit through the winter. But in any case — leaves were an indication that there had to be fruit on the tree, for the fruit develops before the leaves.

This tree called attention to itself as a special tree with an abundance of what other trees lacked. This tree was a parable of at least two things:

1. Hypocrisy

Pretension is a deadly sin. It misleads others. If you profess a great faith and display a form of religion, others will turn to you for help and you will NOT be able to give it to them – they will go away hungry for food for their souls.

Pretension angers the Lord.

In **Luke 13:6-9**, Jesus tells a parable of a fig tree that was barren, but the dresser of the vineyard had compassion on it — he longed to make it fruitful. He dug around it, fertilized it, pruned it, and did everything he could to help it bear fruit. But this tree on the road to Jerusalem was different; it didn't admit it needed help, but covered itself with leaves, like those who cover themselves with a form of godliness. This kind of covering is not any more adequate than the fig leaves Adam and Eve used.

Luke 13:6-9: Jesus spoke this parable

6 He spake also this Parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

7 Then said He unto the dresser of his vineyard, "Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?"

8 And he answering said unto Him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it:

9 And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.



2. Judgment is Sure

When Jesus found deception in the tree, He said:

Matthew 21:19-20:

19 And when He saw a fig tree in the way, He came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow

on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.

²⁰ And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, how soon is the fig tree withered away!

Mark adds that it was:

dried up from the roots, Mark 11:20

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Help is still available for those who are not today bearing spiritual fruit. Jesus, in the verse immediately following, talks about faith to His amazed disciples:

Mark 11:22: And Jesus answering saith unto them. "Have faith in God."

You are not to have faith in your ability to be spectacular in the world – more leaves than anyone else around profits you nothing! You are not to have faith in your ability to cover up your sin and your need, for to Him every secret is known.

Have faith in God — that while you are yet a sinner, He loves you; that while it just now doesn't appear what you will be for Him — if you trust His care, He will cause you to bear spiritual fruit, 30, 60, and 100 fold; and that He can cause your life to bless others to bring glory to Him.

Conclusion:

Are you sick of pretense, worn out by hypocrisy, unsatisfied with imitations? Do you want the true gifts of the Spirit so your life can count for God and can benefit others? Then ask Him to do what you cannot do for yourself: ask Him to make you a blessing.

'Twas easy once to say the phrase

'God works in many wondrous ways.'

But now – 'tis marvelous to see

God works his wonders out through me!

"His risen Life, dynamic power

*Are mine to use through every hour;
I simply bring myself to stand
Safe in the hollow of His hand.
How simple, Lord, could we but see
It is not “help” we need – but Thee!
Then grant me Lord, in Thee to rest,
Quiet – sure – obedient – blessed.
Emboldened by Thy promise true,
I can do all things, Lord, through you.”*

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