

## What Makes Jesus Angry? Mark 11:11-25

### What makes dad angry?

When I don't listen

When I tell a lie

When we don't obey

When one of the brothers gets a speeding ticket

So that is some of the scoop around our household. I am sure we could all make a list. But here is an even better question: What makes Jesus angry? What are the things that set Jesus off? Have you ever thought about that? This morning I want to look at two different times that Jesus was angry. Both of them occur in the same day. I don't think Jesus was having a bad day and lost his cool. I think Jesus came face to face with two of the things that really got Jesus upset.

If you have your bibles turn with me to [Mark 11](#). Let's pick up in verse 1. **READ 11:1-10.**

In these first verses of Mark 11, we have Jesus making His triumphal entry into Jerusalem as the long expected and long awaited Messiah. He fulfills prophecy as He enters Jerusalem riding on a donkey colt. Then the people begin to wave and lay down leafy branches they had cut from trees out in the fields. John and Matthew tell us these were palm branches. Palms were a symbol of Jewish Nationalism and victory. They wave these branches from the side of the road and lay them down in the road in anticipation that a King, a Messianic King has arrived. The people are also laying their cloaks on the road. This was a symbolic gesture of their willingness to submit to this King. Jesus enters Jerusalem in dramatic fashion in fulfillment of the prophets. At this time it appears that the people recognize and understand to some degree what is happening. This is the beginning of Passover week, where they celebrated God's deliverance of Israel from the oppression of Egypt. And now, the Anointed One, the Messianic King of David is here. They have high hopes that Jesus will soon free them from the oppression of Rome. And so at this moment, they give Him all the outward expressions of faith and submission. However, Jesus is a different kind of King than they anticipated. Let's keep reading.

**" And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.** Jesus enters and instead of leading the procession through the city, he dismounts the colt and goes up into the temple. Our text says at this time Jesus looked around at everything. Jesus takes a survey of all that is going on in the temple courts and nothing misses his notice. He stands and inspects everything as the one who has the right to scrutinize what is happening in the temple of the Lord. And what he observes is not pleasant.

**TEMPLE.** The temple was a majestic structure. This is a model that is built to scale and you can get a feel for the look and feel of the temple during the time of Herod. Towards the left of the picture there is the 900-foot southern end of the platform called the Royal Stoa. This giant basilica-style building was made up of four rows of 40 columns

each. It was without a wall creating an open colonnade through which the people could enter directly into the plaza of the Court of Gentiles. This majestic building, soaring to one hundred feet at its highest point, was the largest building on the giant Temple Mount. Apparently it served many purposes, including being the primary center for purchasing sacrificial animals, exchanging money, as well as a meeting place for the Sanhedrin. So this was the building that housed both the law courts as well as all the commercial operations.

About three years before Jesus' triumphal entry, the ruling high priest, Joseph Caiaphas, had made a move to allow the money-changers and sellers of sacrificial animals and birds to set up a Merchants' Quarter in the Royal Stoa. During extremely busy high traffic times like Passover where hundreds of thousands of people might visit, the flow of this merchandising would overflow into the court of the Gentiles. So as Jesus entered the temple Court, He would have found it full of people and filled with dealers of sacrificial animals — oxen, sheep and doves. They performed a necessary and important function for sacrificial worship in the Temple. The laws in the Torah required that animals be offered at various occasions as sacrifices for sin or as offerings for events like the birth of a child, as Mary and Joseph had done after Christ's own birth. Jews who came great distances needed to be able to purchase sacrificial animals near the Temple. However, the law stated that any animals offered must be perfect and unblemished. So there were Temple appointed inspectors who examined sacrificial animals, and they charged a fee. Most of the animals brought in by pilgrims from their own herds were rejected after inspection. Therefore, replacement animals had to be purchased inside the Temple for overly inflated prices — a bare-faced extortion and blackmail in the name of religion.

Throughout the Roman Empire there were several kinds of coins. So pilgrims living outside Judea would bring many kinds of money to Jerusalem. The law stated that every male 20 years old and older was to pay the half shekel tax for himself in the temple. This was about 2 days wages for a common laborer. But there was only one kind of coin acceptable in the temple. So money-changers were allowed by Caiaphas in the Temple in the Royal Stoa and the Court of the Gentiles for those who needed to exchange — again for a fee. And as time went on, the fees became more and more exorbitant. The charging of fees for changing coins was not in itself wrong. The Jewish commentary on the Law, the Talmud allowed for the money changers to make a small value on the transaction. But they were making 10-15% per exchange. No longer were the animals and temple currency being provided to facilitate worship. They were now a way to make a huge profit.

So imagine Jesus entering the temple and seeing all this. Thousands of people with the constant flow of animals and various vendors offering animals. Instead of all this merchandising being done outside the temple, it is now inside the temple. Instead of people providing a service to facilitate worship, people were using the need to worship as a way to create great profit. Jesus moves through the temple grounds and observes all that is going on... His heart breaking.

At this time, it is already late. Jesus decides that this is not the appropriate time to take action. I am sure at this point when Jesus makes no attempt to do anything, his disciples are frustrated and disappointed. They are expecting Him to do something that would match the acclaim He was given arriving as the Messianic King. But at this moment, He just stands there and scrutinizes and examines. Then He decides to leave.

As they depart the temple, Jesus and the twelve leave Jerusalem and make about a 2 mile walk to spend the night in Bethany. Bethany was the hometown of Mary and Martha... so potentially Jesus might have been staying with them.

<sup>12</sup> ***On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry.*** Each gospel adds different elements to the history of this week. Mark and Luke tend to be more precise in the chronology of these events while Matthew tends to be topical in his presentation. The next day as they travel back toward Jerusalem from Bethany, Jesus is hungry. Matthew tells us that they began their journey very early in the day, probably before 6am. Again, Jesus is travelling with his disciples and as they begin the journey, we are told that Jesus begins to feel hunger.

<sup>13</sup> ***And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it.*** Off in the distance Jesus notices that there stood a fig tree full of foliage. Matthew tells us that it is a solitary tree by the roadside (21:19). **FIG TREE.** The tree has an abundance of foliage early in the season. Fig trees would even have their fruit begin to show prior to leafing out. So when Jesus saw a fig tree in full bloom, he could expect that he would find some fruit on the tree and maybe even he would find some figs, though not yet fully ripe, that might be edible. So as Jesus approaches the tree, he has anticipation that he will in fact find what expects to be there.

***When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs.*** When Jesus gets to the tree he finds that there are no figs on the tree under the leaves. **FIG BRANCH.** The “season for figs” means the time to harvest the figs, not that you shouldn’t expect that there would be some present. They would just more than likely be unripened. But this tree was in leaf, advertising that it was bearing fruit. If Jesus had not seen such full foliage, he would not have expected to find the figs. But the foliage gave the promise of the fruit. And Jesus expected to find figs on the tree.

<sup>14</sup> ***And he said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard it.*** Now Jesus curses the fig tree and determines that because of its failure to produce fruit when it was inspected, it would lose its ability to ever provide fruit again. No one would ever eat from this tree again. Look down at verses [20-21](#).

<sup>20</sup> ***As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots.*** <sup>21</sup> ***And Peter remembered and said to him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered.”*** The next morning as they make the same journey back to Jerusalem and go by the same tree, they notice that Jesus’ curse has taken full effect and the tree has withered. Jesus had cursed the tree and said it would be fruitless forever. But here they find it in one day lifeless. At this point, the disciples want a lesson on the power of Christ that could cause something like this to happen. But I want to pause and look at the lesson of the fig tree.

**Why did Jesus curse the fig tree?** If you ever wondered what would cause Jesus to curse, now you know it. Not that his curse is like the slang kind of cursing we often use. But his curse was a very methodical and pointed pronouncement of judgment on the fig tree. Why?

Interestingly, neither Mark nor Matthew record that Jesus made any further explanation about the tree. The disciples heard what he did. And they got the message. So what is the message of the fruitless fig tree? What should we learn from this for ourselves?

The fig tree is an OT type of the nation of Israel. In the prophets, the fig tree bearing fruit is a type of the nation of Israel ([Hosea 9:10](#)). Jesus had even taught the disciples a parable about the barren fig tree ([Luke 13:6-9](#)). So as Jesus curses the tree, the disciples did not ask for an explanation of this object lesson. It was apparent that the tree in full foliage was like the Jewish Nation who proudly boasted that it was God's favored people. Israel was making a bold profession of close association with the Living God. Therefore, Israel should have been a people who produced fruit in keeping with its profession. When Jesus came to the tree and found no fruit and decided to curse the tree, the disciples understood the object lesson. The tree consumed but did not produce. The tree had lots of foliage promising fruit. But it had no fruit. Lots of promising and pledging and acknowledging. But no fruit. Kind of like all the people who on his triumphal entry would lay a cloak down in the road to signify submission to the Messianic King and then later in the week at the cross yell out, "Crucify Him."

But this object lesson wasn't just for the nation of Israel or for the disciples. It is for us. We must learn the lesson of the figless tree. What makes Jesus angry?

**When we make a show of life that promises fruit yet we bear none.** Is your spiritual life mainly a lot of pledges and promises and declarations... but pretty barren when it comes to fruit? As a follower of Christ, Jesus said that you will glorify God when you bear much fruit. In Scripture there are three kinds of fruit we read about. The fruit of a Spirit filled Character ([Gal 5](#)). The fruit of Spirit-filled community in the body ([Romans 15:1-6](#)). And the fruit of Spirit-filled actions where we obey and carry out the commands of Christ ([Col 1:10](#), [Rom 4](#) – example of Abraham).

So here we sit on the beginning of a new year. And is this going to be another year of foliage in your life but now fruit? Is this another year of promising and pledging and acknowledging? Or will this be a year of faith and action?

May I strongly encourage you this week... take some time and sit down and make for yourself some goals. Keep this very pointed, very measurable, very simple. Choose one that fuels the Spirit. One that will give the Holy Spirit fuel to work in your life. This year I am reading through the bible again using a specific reading plan and a devotional. I know that every day God will have access to my heart and soul through His Word. Maybe for you it has to do with the practice of prayer. Or maybe it has to do with some other area of your life... Second, find fellowship that will provide you with true biblical community and accountability. Get in a Life Group. Third, choose an activity that will challenge you to engage with Christ in His ministry and mission. Serve faithfully. But to drive home that point, we must take a look at our next verses. Look with me at verse [15](#).

**<sup>15</sup> And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons.**

**<sup>16</sup> And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple.** Jesus enters into the court of the Gentiles and begins to take very pronounced action. Jesus comes into the temple in the spirit of Malachi ([3:1-4](#)) and he overthrows tables and drives the various workers out of the area. Notice that there is special care taken regarding the pigeons. The pigeon was the animal sacrifice of the very poor. And even in the case of the poorest people, extortion and fees and manipulation abounded.

The temple was big business. It was a cash rich business. The leaders, especially the high priest and his family were made extremely wealthy through all this activity done wrongly in the name of God. And this made Jesus irate. Ministry had become about money and the whole temple had become a place for the convenient exercise of religion rather than the zealous pursuit of an authentic relationship with the Living God.

<sup>17</sup> ***And he was teaching them and saying to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers.”*** The Court of the Gentiles was supposed to be a place where gentiles could come to seek the truth, to come for prayer and instruction and a reverent approach to the living God. But instead, the place had been transformed into an open air market for the convenience of people going through the religious motions of worship. Jesus says that instead of a place that is a light to the lost, instead of being a place for authentic worship where the presence of God would spread hope, rather than being a place of truth and a haven for prayer, it had become the hideout for all those that wanted to make big money. The temple had become the place of worldly religious corruption rather than the place of refuge one could find as a shelter to seek God. And so Jesus takes on the religious establishment. Make no mistake. The actions of Jesus in temple are authoritative claims. He is usurping and calling into question and defying the orders of the High Priest and the Sanhedrin. Jesus is making a claim here. He is asserting a right. He is claiming the right to dictate the procedures being used in worship. And reclaiming the place of worship not just as act for one’s own satisfaction, but for its God designed role as a witness to all the peoples of the world.

<sup>18</sup> ***And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching.***

We learn a second thing here about what makes Jesus angry. **Why did Jesus empty the temple? It is when our faith becomes a religion rather than a relationship.** It is when we lose our bearings and think that our faith is about our convenience and not about spreading the hope of the love of God to the peoples of all the nations. Jesus is angry when His people start going through the motions and playing the game and attending the services and talking the talk. Jesus wants His people and their worship to stand a light to the nations.

And that brings us to our third application. Choose to serve. Serve in a ministry within the walls of this church that helps people grow. You could serve in so many ways... children’s... youth... women’s... worship... prayer... etc. And choose to serve in mission to a lost world. Don’t think that your worship is just about you. It is about your neighbor. It is about your friend at school. It is about your co-worker. It is about your relative. It is about the other parents on the team. You are a light to the lost. And your life is supposed to be a vibrant testimony to the grace of God, not a meaningless expression of empty religion. You are God’s missionary. Take the light of Christ to those who need it.