

and He would not permit anyone to carry goods through the temple. 17 And He began to teach and say 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 robbers' den." 18 And the chief priests and the scribes heard this, and began seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for all the multitude was astonished at His teaching.

Jesus had come and inspected the Temple on the day of the **Triumphal Entry** (v-12). Afterward, He returned to Bethany and on the way, He **cursed the fig tree** on which He found **no fruit**. This was symbolic of His inspection of Israel's worship in the Temple. The next day He **enters the Temple** and with swift action puts an end to its **hypocrisy** and its dishonest exploitation of God's worshippers there. **"15 And they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to cast out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who were selling doves; 16 and He would not permit anyone to carry goods through the temple."** This event was no easy feat, as the outer court of the Temple encompassed **many acres** of land covered with **merchants** and **livestock**, and the entire **enterprise of sacrificial offering sales**. That Jesus could go through it all and bring it to **order** was staggering. You can see how this must have **angrily enflamed** the religious leaders who were directly **benefitting** from the **corrupt** and exorbitant system. The Lord of the Temple has now suddenly come to His Temple in fulfillment of **Malachi's prophecy**. He has come to purify His Temple and His people. This is why we commonly call this event the **"cleansing of the Temple."**

**Malachi 3:1-4** - 3 "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. **And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,**" says the Lord of hosts. 2 "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. 3 "And He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness. 4 "Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord, as in the days of old and as in former years.

Here we have seen the **zeal** for the **God** that consumed Jesus, and the resolute **exercise** of His **own authority** in Israel's Temple. And as He always accompanied His actions with teaching, **"17 And He began to teach and say 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 robbers' den."** Jesus here points out the corrupt action of the merchants and moneychangers, who would charge exorbitant fees for currency

exchange. But here He has also made reference to Isaiah and God's intention for the Temple to be a place where all people worshipped and communed with God.

**Isaiah 56:7-11** - 7 Even those I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; **For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.**" 8 The Lord God, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares, **"Yet others I will gather to them, to those already gathered."** 9 All you beasts of the field, All you beasts in the forest, Come to eat. **10 His watchmen are blind, All of them know nothing.** All of them are dumb dogs unable to bark, Dreamers lying down, who love to slumber; **11 And the dogs are greedy, they are not satisfied. And they are shepherds who have no understanding; They have all turned to their own way, Each one to his unjust gain, to the last one.** NASB

This whole scene is one of remarkable **interruption** of the **massive system** of Temple worship, which was at this time serving more than **1 million** worshippers. Just the volume alone would have made the religious leaders **very rich** from their **portion** of the **profits**, which in many cases was several times over the actual cost of the sacrificial animals. Now **Jesus** was **cutting** into their **pocketbooks**. **"18 And the chief priests and the scribes heard this, and began seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for all the multitude was astonished at His teaching."** This event caused them to focus even more intently on Jesus, and over the next day or two He will have **several confrontations** with them, ending in His arrest, trial and false conviction.

**Mark 11:19-26** - 19 And whenever evening came, they would go out of the city. 20 And as they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up. 21 And being reminded, Peter said to Him, "Rabbi, behold, the fig tree which You cursed has withered." 22 And Jesus answered saying to them, "Have faith in God. 23 "Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it shall be granted him. 24 "Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you. 25 "And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions. 26 ["But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions."]

Jesus is **not staying** on **Jerusalem** during Passion Week, but it is supposed in **Bethany** with Mary and Martha. As they come upon the **fig tree** which Jesus cursed they find it **withered**. **"19 And whenever evening came, they would go**

out of the city. **20** And as they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up. **21** And being reminded, Peter said to Him, "Rabbi, behold, the fig tree which You cursed has withered." The way in which Mark organizes this section **11:11-11:21** suggests a **connection** between the **fig tree** and the **cleansing of the temple**.

- v-11:11- **Inspection of Temple**
- v-11:12-13 - **Fig Tree cursed**
- v- 11:15-17 - **Cleansing Temple**
- v- 11:20-21 - **Fig Tree withered**

In the Old Testament the **fig tree** is often a **metaphor** for **Israel** and its standing before God (Jer 8:13, Hos 9:10, 16, Joel 1:7). This **cursing** of the **fig tree** is a rather obvious **symbol** of **God's displeasure** with the **fruitless** condition of **Israel** and its **Temple** worship, when the **Lord** of the Temple has come and found it wanting. In response He pronounces a judgment **curse** from **God** which will bring **Jerusalem**, its **people** and its **Temple** to **ruin** in just a few short years. This will be the topic of Jesus' **Olivet Discourse** in chapter 13. But here Jesus uses the cursing of the fig tree as another lesson for the disciples on **faith** and **prayer**. "**22** And Jesus answered saying to them, "Have faith in God. **23** "Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it shall be granted him. **24** "Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you." Here Jesus giving a remarkable maxim about **faith** and **prayer**, one which we would all do well to **heed** and **practice**. Let us not be Christian's of little faith and little prayer, but **much faith** and **much prayer**. Let us take His simple yet profound advice, "**I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you.**" But also take note of the Lord's **requirement** that you be **reconciled** to others in your life should you be so bold as to pray to God with an earnest request. "**25** "And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions. **26** ["But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions."] Wow! Let us see here how the Lord will not **accept hypocrisy** in this degree by those who would be **truly forgiven**. And what a **solemn call** to **all of us** who would be **saved** and **forgiven**, that no outstanding **rift** or wound lay between us and **anyone**, but rather we are to be the **peacemakers** that Christ has **called us** to be.

**Mark 11:27-33** - **27** And they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, and scribes, and elders came to Him, **28** and began