



CONNECT GROUP NOTES

Sunday 05.11.2023

“Fruit & Overturned Tables”

Preacher

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Scripture

“Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

Jesus Curses a Fig Tree and Clears the Temple Courts

12 The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. 13 Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. 14 Then he said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard him say it.

15 On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, 16 and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. 17 And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’”

18 The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

19 When evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

20 In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. 21 Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!"

Mark 11:11-21

Thought

Jesus' anger in the temple was because the intent of the Temple was not to keep people out, but to keep people in. It was a house of prayer, made for the whole world to interface with the living God, yet what Jesus saw was a place of exclusion. He enters the temple and things become radically disrupted.

He does the same thing in our lives today. When new life enters our world, when Jesus enters our life, He brings about incredible change and transformation. This can be unsettling. We bring Him into our heart and allow Him to make the changes in our lives that He needs to make. This change isn't easy, but it's the change we need and ultimately the change we want. In going through the process of change, our lives become far better than just managing it on our own.

He often takes action in our lives and explains it later on - or sometimes He doesn't explain it at all. We so often want everything explained before it occurs - but this is not how faith works. We have to realise that He turns our lives upside down for good - he turns over the tables, He flips everything upside down to make our hearts a place where all things are in the right order again.

There are priorities and goals in our lives that we have set up that might be overturned and changed by Jesus. Yet if we trust in Him, we can believe that He is changing things for good.

As we look back to the story of the fig tree, we see that the writer, Mark, has placed these stories intentionally together. The fig tree is a picture of the temple. Jesus saw leaves, but there was no fruit, just as He looked at the temple and saw much activity, but no fruit. Sometimes it's the same with us; we can be busy people, busy with religion and good things, but what



Jesus wants to do in our lives is to grow fruit - fruit that remains and fruit that lasts. Not just the appearance of something worthwhile. He wants to find people who are not just doing religion, but living a fruitful life. A life that flourishes and a life that draws others closer to the presence of a loving God.

And so, He turns the tables. He withers the fig. He removes the appearance of activity where there is no fruit, and He begins a deep work in us. Some things have to go, there are losses, there may be pain and disruption, yet as we trust the creator, as we trust the one who truly knows the deepest needs of our heart, He will create something new.

Will we let the process happen? Will we invite Christ into our lives to do what He needs to do, to change the priorities that He wants to change, and to allow Him to grow the buds of new life - green leaves of gentleness, of patience, of kindness, or love for others and love for Christ?

Discussion Points

1. How can I measure whether something is fruitful or not in my life?
2. Are there areas of my life right now where I feel Jesus is overturning tables?
3. What does it mean to truly trust that God has my best interests at heart? How can I know this to be the case?

Personal application + Prayer

Dear Jesus,

May my life be fruitful. Grant me the grace and boldness to open my heart to You, to walk the process of change and transformation with You. Open my eyes to the beauty of who You are, that I may truly behold you, to know Your heart, and to truly trust in Your goodness. Do what You need to do, Lord, may I be ever fruitful.

Amen.