

## Message #41

## Mark 11:22-26

Years ago I had a friend whose son was a stunt man in Hollywood. He made his living by doing stunts for movies. The more difficult the stunt, the more he got paid. He said one of the highest paying stunts was flying out of a moving car. Now when movies are made, many are made on stage sets and those sets aren't really what they appear to be. For example, you could walk down what looks to be a main street of a city and it wasn't a city at all. It was a series of props that made the city look like a bunch of buildings that really didn't exist.

That is what Jesus saw in the world of religion when He was here on earth. Frankly, He still sees the same thing today. What He saw was a bunch of religious people who looked good externally. They had their impressive place of worship. They wore their religious clothing. They had their religious liturgy. It was all a good show. But that is all it was. They did not have hearts right with God and when Jesus Christ came to town, He exposed it all.

He went into the Temple for the second time and He purged it. His place of worship which was supposed to be a place of prayer and ministry of the Word had become a robbers den. People were robbed of truth and they were being robbed of a true relationship with God. Spiritually speaking, the nation was dead.

To illustrate that point, Jesus pronounced a judgment on a fig tree. There was a fig tree right on the main street going into Jerusalem. People had to walk by that tree every day, so Jesus cursed the tree so that it was dead and could not bear fruit to illustrate the situation with the nation Israel. She was spiritually dry and fruitless. The nation had withered and, as a result, the program of God was not going to bless this nation. It would not bear fruit.

Now Christ's disciples were still living in this world. They had to still live in a world of religious phonies and frauds, so Jesus needed to challenge them to keep their relationship with God alive. They needed to have faith, stay focused on God's Word and keep praying.

**IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT MOST PEOPLE OF THE WORLD ARE SPIRITUALLY DEAD AND DRY, GOD'S PEOPLE NEED TO HAVE FAITH IN GOD THAT BELIEVES THE PROPHETIC WORD OF GOD AND PRAYS TO THE GOD OF THE WORD.**

Now one critical key of true Bible interpretation is context. The context of all of this is so very important. Jesus is on His way into Jerusalem to die on the cross so He can save sinners. He has illustrated by that fig tree episode that this nation is dead.

His Jewish Apostles would be left here on this earth to live in and minister in a dead religious world. **What Jesus wanted was for them to maintain their faith in Him, maintain their faith in God's Word and maintain a prayer life.**

Now in view of the fact that the religious world was dead, Jesus teaches His disciples three lessons:

**LESSON #1 – Christ’s disciples need to have faith in God. 11:22**

Now the verb “you have faith” is a present tense verb. So this means Jesus is telling His disciples that you need to continually have faith in God at all times. Jesus is teaching His disciples that they are going to walk through life seeing impressive religion that is big, showy, flashy and dead. The key to their survival is faith. True faith in the true God.

Now specifically in view of the fig tree illustration and in view of what He is about to say concerning the mountain, **what He specifically means is that you need to always believe and trust in God, even when you don’t see fruit things happening.** You need to maintain your faith even when you don’t understand what God is doing.

You are saved by faith in Christ, not by faith in some dead religion. You are saved by faith in Christ, not by your works. You are saved by faith in Christ, not by your attempts to keep the O.T. law. Faith alone in Christ alone is what saves and that is what these disciples needed to know and communicate.

Furthermore, this is how we grow. Spiritual development and growth comes also by faith. This is something that most people do not understand. Spiritual victory is not a works fight, it is a faith fight. Victory in any context belongs to God and it is crying out to Him that can bring victory. Probably one of the most famous verses in the book of Proverbs says this very thing: Proverbs 3:5 says, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.” We will not find spiritual victory by trusting in us, but by trusting in the Lord.

Faith is the key principle for salvation and it is the key principle for sanctification. So when we live in a world of religious insanity, we need to maintain our faith in God.

We may remember that when we went through Habakkuk, we saw that God was permitting bizarre things to happen in the world, things Habakkuk could not even conceive. God’s council is that the just shall live by faith believing that God is sovereign and He knows what He is doing.

God is working out His program and even when you don’t have a clue as to what that program is, His disciples need to maintain their faith in God, His Word and His work.

**LESSON #2 – Christ’s disciples need to have faith in the Word of God. 11:23**

What this verse is actually teaching is that God’s people need to stay focused on carefully studying and believing the written Word of God in a world of dead religion.

Now when we read this verse, the first question that pops into our minds is what does this mean?

I am sure that was also the first question that popped into the minds of the disciples. Most have taken a metaphorical interpretation to this text saying that it means faith that is based on the Word of God is a faith that can remove obstacles. Any obstacle may be removed by faith. I do think this is an application in some ways that we may make, but I don't think that is what Jesus has in mind here. The historical and geographical and grammatical context is critical here.

Jesus has just illustrated that the program of God with Israel is dead. She is not a fruit-bearing nation or people of God. So what the disciples were about to see was that Jesus would die on a cross and then rise again and ascend into heaven and they would be left here on earth to go forward. They would see a nation that would remain dead spiritually and a Temple that would ultimately be destroyed. The program of God for Israel looked like it was over.

In view of this they needed to stay focused on believing God and the prophetic Word of God. Now the faith they are asked to have here is a faith that is very deep and very knowledgeable of the Word of God and the program of God.

It is specifically a faith that pertains to moving a mountain. The mountain being referred to here is a specific mountain "this mountain," not "any mountain." In fact, the Greek in **verse 23** is very strong and very specific. The noun "mountain" contains not only an article "the" ("the mountain"), but also a demonstrative pronoun "this," ("this the mountain").

**Based on the written syntax, we conclude that Jesus had a very specific mountain in mind when He said this.** He does not tell them if they have faith they can move "any mountain." He tells them this in view of the dead Temple, in view of fruitless Israel and in view of a specific mountain.

Now before we make sense of this, let me say **it is not faith that moves mountains, it is God who moves mountains. The responsibility of the people of God is to keep their faith in the God of the Bible who created the mountains and can and will actually move the mountains.** It is God who will actually move mountains just before Christ returns and also when Christ returns. Mountain ranges will become important just before Christ returns. Luke predicts every mountain and hill will be leveled (Luke 3:5).

At the beginning of the Tribulation, God is literally going to move mountains and mountain ranges (Revelation 6:14). We also know in the final part of the Tribulation God is going to cause mountains to disappear (Revelation 6:20). All of this happens before Israel gets her land and is given a new clean heart and slate. So mountains are critical to the program of God as it relates to this dead nation.

However, there are specifically two mountains that play a key role in prophetic prophecy as it relates to Jesus Christ and Jerusalem. Mount Zion upon which the Temple is built. This is a very important mountain to the prophetic program of God. Isaiah predicts that there will be a major change to this mountain when Jesus Christ returns to establish His kingdom (Is. 2:2-3). Micah predicts exactly the same thing. Mount Zion will be raised in elevation (Micah 4:1).

**The second mountain that is critical to Christ's return is the Mount of Olives.** Based on the fact that Jesus is walking back into Jerusalem and based on the fact that this specific mountain is mentioned in **Mark 11:1**, we believe this is the specific mountain Jesus has in mind. In fact, Jesus will teach about Temple destruction sitting on this Mount of Olives (Mark 13:2-3).

Zechariah specifically predicts that this mountain, the Mount of Olives will literally be moved when Jesus Christ returns a second time and stands on it with His feet (**Zechariah 14:4**). This verse says, **"And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from the east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south."**

Now the thing that Jesus is talking to His disciples about here is the eschatological plan of God that is found in the Word of God that includes the moving of the Mount of Olives when Christ returns. If you split the mountain from east to west, then half of it moves toward the Dead Sea and the other half moves toward the Mediterranean Sea.

What Jesus is telling His disciples is that they need to maintain their faith in Him that believes He will return and this mountain will be moved, because the Word of God says it will happen. So the prediction is that one who believes in his heart that something will happen to this mountain can know with certainty that it is going to happen.

This is not telling the disciples they can go to the Tetons or the Swiss Alps or Mount McKinley or Mount Everest and stand there and shut their eyes and have faith to move those mountains. This is talking about a very specific mountain that will be moved when Christ comes back to give Israel her land and her kingdom.

What He is emphasizing here is that faith in the Word of God is the key to living life. It is the key to surviving life. All one has to do is maintain their faith and believe in the program of God.

Now the question comes has anyone ever come along with a faith that looks to the Mount of Olives and asks it to move? Did any of the disciples every say to the Mount of Olives go into the sea? Will anyone ever come along who will have faith that will look to the Mount of Olives and ask it to move? We have no record that any of these actually did this, but we do believe that one day Jesus would come back and move this mountain. In fact, the Apostle Peter, who was listening to this and relaying this to Mark, specifically said that at Christ's coming there would be a judgment against the heavens and earth (II Pet. 3:3-13).

There will come a day when those mountains will be moved because that is what the Word of God predicts and the Apostles believed that all of their days. One day Israel will finally realize that Jesus Christ is the God Savior Messiah King and He will literally move the Mount of Olives.

**LESSON #3** – Christ’s disciples need to have prayer to God. **11:24**

Now having faith is now taken from the context of trusting and believing in the Word of God and the prophetic program of God to the context of praying to God.

God wants His people talking to Him. God wants His people praying and asking Him for things. The word for “prayer” is one that means when we pray we need to think in terms of going into the very presence of God. This is a very reverent perspective we must have about prayer.

There are two main matters that Jesus brings out in establishing to His disciples some criteria of prayer at this point:

**Criteria #1** - God’s people need to pray by continually asking. **11:24a**

God’s people need to continually talk to God. God wants us coming to Him and specifically requesting things from Him. God wants His people petitioning Him about various things and if we don’t do this, we will miss out. James says, “you do not have because you do not ask” (James 4:2). So a key to a vibrant spiritual life that is alive and not dead is praying and asking God for things.

**Criteria #2** - God’s people must pray by continually believing. **11:24b**

God’s people must continually believe in God. Now what they must continually believe is the fact that God will answer what they are praying about.

Again James says when we pray we need to ask things in faith because the one who doubts will not “receive anything from the Lord” (James 1:5-7).

When we are praying about things we must believe that God is capable of answering the request and that He will answer the request. Jesus tells His Apostles that if they will do that their requests will be granted.

Now I want us to observe here that Jesus does not say at this point that you must pray in My name. This, however, will become a key point of prayer (John 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23-24, 26). The things we pray about must be in the name of Jesus Christ and consistent with the name of Jesus Christ.

**Criteria #3** - God’s people must pray by continually forgiving. **11:25-26**

Now this gets at the heart of the whole matter that is actually being discussed. When we pray we need to be willing to pray with a spirit of forgiveness so that we ourselves will be forgiven of our own transgressions. In this Grace Age we do not forgive to be forgiven, we forgive because we have already been forgiven (Ephesians 4:32).

But the contextual matter here is prayer. In fact, it is a specific prayer which even includes the posture—standing. To stand praying was something very specific in Israel and the Temple. Hannah stood in the House of the Lord, asking for a son (I Sam. 1:26). The Pharisee stood in the Temple praying in all of His hypocrisy, which I think is critical to this text (Luke 18:11).

So when we go to God in prayer, we must have our transgressions forgiven. Now the only One, who actually can forgive our transgressions and open the door to heaven, is Jesus Christ. He is the only One who can make it possible for us to pray. It is His work that enables us to come boldly to His throne.

The point of this is when we go to God in prayer, we must go with the realization that our transgressions have been forgiven and we cannot go with an attitude that is focused on other people. **We cannot go before God focused on someone else's sin, we need to be focused on our own (Luke 18:11).** If someone has done something sinful against us we cannot be focused on that when we go to pray. We have our own sin and baggage to deal with.

Now **verse 26** says that if we do not forgive others, God will not forgive us. Actually a number of significant earlier manuscripts do not contain this verse. Many think it was a scribal addition based on Matthew 6:15. So the point is in order for God to hear and answer our prayers, our sins must be forgiven by God.

Now we make the following observations about prayer:

**First** of all, God will not forgive us until we have come to terms with our sin and His Son.

**Second**, God will only hear our prayer if we pray it through the name of Jesus.

**Third**, we do not forgive to be forgiven; we forgive because we have been forgiven.

When someone comes and says I have done wrong, then we are obligated to forgive them.

We are living in a world of religion that is broadly leading people to hell and destruction. It is impressive religion, but it is dead religion. What we need to do is to maintain faith, maintain a study of God's Word and maintain our prayer life.