

THEME: What glorifies God?

TEXT: Matthew 21:12-22; Mark 11:12-19; 20-26

OPENING STORY: Anyone who says the Bible is boring, or thumbs through “The Bible for Dummies” and feels they have a comprehensive understanding of all the Scriptures is like the kid who makes the connection between dark clouds and rain... and now believes, “Hey! Now I can tell the weather!!!!” While he may be only *SLIGHTLY* less accurate than those who forecast for a living, he is still a life-time away from understanding the big picture.

The Scriptures are like that, because even as old as you and I are in the Word, and as much as we have been exposed to over our lifetime, the Bible will never cease to hold mysteries and truth that we have yet to learn or uncover.

TS: Consider the Account of “the Failing Fig Tree.”

LESSON:

Let’s start by asking ourselves a few questions:

Q1:) Is this fig tree bearing fruit? - No.

Q2:) WHY isn’t it bearing fruit? - It is out of season. Apple trees don’t have apples on them all the time, you know. Fruit typically comes in seasons.

Q3:) Is it the tree’s fault that it is not in season? - Ultimately, WHO set up the seasons? Who should have known better than to expect an out-of-season fig tree to be abundantly stocked with figs? Was someone supposed to be taping them up there for just such an occasion?!?

WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?!?

I’ll admit, when I first read this story, I was pretty quick to take up an offense for the tree. It’s not the tree’s fault that it is out of season? What do you expect?!? Who here finds the tree completely innocent in this crime? Is Christ being an unrighteous judge, perhaps influenced by His hunger?

- --- I doubt that hunger played much of a role for someone who fasted 40 days in the wilderness.
- --- And furthermore:

Jonah 4

9 And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.

Like Jonah, I was *completely* missing the point.

SUMMARY:

Fruit tree wasn't there to bear fruit. Fruit tree was there for an object lesson.

The Object Lesson revolves around 1.) FAITH'S ROLE IN PRAYER 2.) FORGIVENESS' ROLE IN PRAYER.

Q: Why didn't Jesus, rather, BLESS the fig tree, that it might give forth fruit? - The idea is to BOTH convey the truth that asking in FAITH is necessary, as well as the illustration of the LACK OF FRUIT itself.

Forgiveness, at its heart, is little more than PRAGMATICAL LONG SUFFERING towards our fellow sin-riddled man. How can I hold ought against any man when God so freely forgives my own trespasses. A tree with no fruit is like a Christian who will not forgive others. The fruit of the spirit cannot grow.

TRESPASS – (para-ptoma) – side-slip.

ILL – When climbing a phone pole, it is a lot easier to climb 3' off the ground than it is 30' off the ground. Why? The basic action is the same. The basic principles still apply. The basic functions of the gaffs/hooks are the same. The pole itself only changes in diameter slightly. ... It's a totally different faith at 30' vs. 3'.

I am reminded of the rich man who kept all the law, and to whom Jesus admonished to sell off his inventory and follow Him. *"How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!"* – Our nature is to need a sure thing to catch us in case our primary goes out. Its our 'back up', if you will.

- We depend on God to supply all our need according to His riches in glory.
- We have a job to provide for our needs, as God supplies them.
- We have a car to ensure we have our choice of jobs that best suits our tastes.
- Insurance is our backup if the car ever crashes.
- Savings is our backup in case insurance finds a loophole.
- Friends and family is our backup in case our savings doesn't hold up.
- The firearm is our backup in case no one else can come through for us.
- Oddly enough, then GOD is our back up if the arm of flesh fails us.

Why isn't God both our primary AND our backup?

ILL - When building the San Francisco Golden-Gate Bridge, Chief Engineer Joseph Strauss determined to challenge the industry's standard construction fatality rate of 1 death per \$1M spent.

High winds, churning currents, and towering heights made bridge construction particularly dangerous, painfully slow, hyper tedious, and in some cases, could paralyze workers with fear!

The book, “Spanning the Gate” by Stephen Cassady mentions, “*The Golden Gate was not the first big job to feature hard hats and safety lines as some have claimed. But it was the first to enforce their use with the threat of dismissal.*”

Workplace Safety took a huge leap in a new direction. Safety lines, hard hats, respirator masks (*for riveters*), glare-free goggles, wind-protection cream, and even sauerkraut juice!!! (Administered to those suspected of hangovers or ‘hitting the sauce to brace up for work.’)

But the two safety features credited for doing the most good was:

- 1.) An on-site **field hospital** staffed by doctors.
- 2.) A **manila rope safety net**, suspended under the ‘floor’ of the bridge during the roadway structure. Suspended from pylon to pylon, the net cost was \$130k. The net worth was invaluable. It extended 10’ out on each side of the trusses, and while it only saved 19 men (*called members of the ‘Halfway-to-Hell Club’*), it served to bolster the confidence to work quickly and efficiently.

On a project the size and scope of the **Golden Gate Bridge** for the 1930’s, only 11 men died during the construction. You can read their names on a plaque on the south-side entrance of the west sidewalk. A scaffolding collapsed and fell through the safety net, dragging 10 men with it.

When you do not have a safety net to catch you, fear can become a paralyzing factor.