

**Unhindered Prayer (Mark 11:20-25)**

I. The Fig Tree and the Temple

A. The Context

1. Here Mark has shared that Jesus is headed towards Jerusalem for his triumphal entry (11:1-11). This is the day when people among the disciples begin to discern that he is truly the king who has been promised to rule over Israel. After the declaration of his kingship, he goes to the temple. As the Messiah of Israel, Second Temple Jewish thought dictated he had authority over the temple as the one in the line of its builder (Zechariah 6:12-15).
2. After looking at everything in the temple, he travels to Bethany and sees a fig tree. Because the tree looked lush but had no figs, he curses the tree (11:12-14). This is an example of intercalation or also called the Markan Sandwich. This is an instance when Mark intertwines two narratives in an other for them to mutually interpret each other.
3. Jesus turns from the tree, goes to Jerusalem, and casts out those doing commerce in the temple. He accuses them not supporting the true mission of the temple of God but encouraging brigandry (11:15-19). The temple looked lush and the leadership of the temple appeared ready to lead Israel but they were effectively causing Israel to fall into ruin. Thus, as Jesus had cursed the fig tree and cast out the money changers, so too would God intervene and destroy the temple.

B. Praying for Divine Power (11:20-24)

1. When Jesus and his disciples passed by the fig tree he had cursed, they saw it dried up from the roots. Jesus had declared the fig tree should die because it was not serving its function. In the same way, the temple, the place of prayer, would die because it no longer served its function. But Jesus used this curse of the tree and activity in the temple to explore the potency of prayer .
  - i. Faith is a prerequisite for power: We must believe God when we pray and trust that he will fulfill his promises.
  - ii. Nothing stops the power of God: When we have faith, we are declaring and acknowledging that God's power is the greatest force in existence. No obstacle can stand in its way.

C. Those who believe God in prayer MUST be willing Forgive Others

1. Whenever you stand praying: Praying can be done standing up or in any position. Standing and rocking is part of the Jewish posture for prayer.
2. Forgiveness is a necessary act in prayer. Faith in God is the natural response to God's grandeur. But faith requires faithfulness, which we sorely lack. God thus must forgive us for us to approach him. We must forgive to be like God. To share in God's power, we must be willing to act like God in forgiving others.