

Lives of Leaves or Fruit of Father

By Pastor Marvin R. Barham

Matthew 21:18-22 *18Now in the morning as he returned into the city, **he hungered**. 19And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and **found nothing thereon, but leaves only**, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. 20And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, **How soon** is the fig tree withered away! 21Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, **If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.** 22And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*

Faith to Accomplish the Impossible

Here Jesus provides an acted parable for his disciples, symbolizing another prophetic act of judgment. Because of their unpalatable taste, these early figs rarely were eaten; but someone too hungry to care about taste would eat them anyway. A leafy tree lacking early figs, however, would bear no figs at all that year (F. Bruce 1980:73-74; Witherington 1990:173).

Have you ever asked, "What do I really hunger for? Do I hunger for more of God?" Better yet, have you ever asked, "What does my God hunger for?" Friends, I can only pray that you hunger for more of God. However, I can tell you what Father hungers for. **He hungers for a people who hunger for more of Him**. He hungers for a people who wear His mark and bear the fruit of His life-transforming power and authority. Jesus comes into the city with a hunger and in this hunger is the authority of the Father. God is looking for such a people who live in a city where there is hunger and exercise the authority to fill that void. What is the hunger of the city? It is a hunger for truth and justice.

We live in a day where injustice is the norm. Injustice runs rampant. When the foundations of social morality have been so twisted by the lies of selfish and perverted propaganda, the cities gates of justice are destroyed and the just are oppressed. The city hungers for justice in a famine of truth, justice that only comes from the power of truth, justice that can only come through a people who walk in obedience to the authority of the Kingdom of God. A people of obedience who believe, and live what they believe, can move what the rest of the world sees as an impossibility. Can we really save our nation? Can we really overcome sin and injustice in the earth? Can we really have victory in our lives? What is impossible to you and I is not impossible with God. What is impossible with your limited authority is not impossible with the authority of God. Have faith, have obedience, and let doubt and compromise flee from you. **For from whom else does your salvation come?**

Jesus comes to this fig tree which bears no fruit for truth. Instead, it has only an outward appearance of a healthy plant. **God does not want a people who simply look healthy on the outside**. Dr. Jeff Edwards said, "**Most people will settle for image over reality**." God wants a real people, a people who are really His. He desires a people whose health and prosperity of soul produces the fruit of the Kingdom for the entire city to see. **He seeks a fruit that He might partake thereof and fulfill His Kingdom desire. He seeks that you might bear fruit for the Master's table and the fruit of righteousness in your life might fill the belly of the Father**. Again, God hungers for a people who bear fruit of faith -- faith being absolute, surrendered obedience to the will of Father found in His Word, His Heart, His Spirit.

Although Matthew retains Mark's emphasis from the context-judgment on the temple, Matthew places primary stress on Jesus' lesson of faith. "Moving mountains" was a Jewish metaphor for accomplishing what was difficult or virtually impossible. Like the prophets of old, Jesus' disciples could do whatever God called them to do. **Faith, of course, implies obedience to God's wishes, not simply acting on our own**. Given the surrounding context of conflict, Jesus' model of faith includes facing death bravely in obedience to God's call-and trusting his power over death itself. (BibleGateway.com is © Copyright 1995-2007 IVP New Testament Commentaries)

The barren fig-tree cursed.

This cursing of the barren fig-tree represents the state of hypocrites in general, and so teaches us that Christ looks for the power of religion in those who profess it, and the savor of it from those that have the show of it. His just

expectations from flourishing professors are often disappointed; he comes to many, seeking fruit, and finds leaves only. **A false profession commonly withers in this world, and it is the effect of Christ's curse.** The fig-tree that had no fruit soon lost its leaves. This represents the state of the nation and people of the Jews in particular. Our Lord Jesus found among them nothing but leaves. And after they rejected Christ, blindness and hardness grew upon them, till they were undone, and their place and nation rooted up. The Lord was righteous in it. Let us greatly fear the doom denounced on the barren fig-tree. (Mt 21:23-27) (Matthew Henry's Commentary)

So it is that our nation no longer primarily bears the fruit of a righteous nation, but instead is a nation covered with leaves. What justice that remains is propped up by lies of self-justification, the hope of a false utopia of hedonism and humanism, a lie of a liberty where each can do as he wills with no repercussions. As a nation we are rapidly moving towards a society where Christ is not only rejected, but the very Spirit of truth is persecuted and replaced by the idols of human enmity, perversion and pride. We want to believe that we are still the nation we were when it comes to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. We want to believe we are still a nation that stands against injustice and liberates the oppressed. But instead, we have become a nation who has lost its soul. We have lost truth, and injustice oppresses all who seek truth.

Dr. Jeff Edwards states, "In the Kingdom of God, the harvest are made manifest when the kingdom's of man crumble. Every system, every government of man is being tried and it is God's doing." **The fruit Father seeks is the "Power of His Authority" and the "Authority of His Power" evident in your life NOW.** Let the season be TODAY, not a season to come that someday you might walk in the light of His truth or someday you might walk in the power of His authority and someday His authority might fully govern all of your life. The world is looking for someone with real authority that can give them hope and once again let truth rain victorious upon injustice in their families, their communities and their lives.

Matthew 21:23-27 *23And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, **By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?** 24And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. 25The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And **they reasoned** with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? 26But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. 27And they answered Jesus, and said, **We cannot tell.** And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.*

To this day the enmity of men's hearts question the authority of the Master. Resolve this very question in your life today. By whose authority do you live? By whose authority is your life governed? Whose authority is sovereign in the earth today? When trials come your way, whose authority rules your situation?

Notice that the religious leaders "reasoned". **When you are walking and living by the transcendent authority of the Kingdom of God, there is no place for reason. When you reason you get no answer. Reason is fine in the affairs of man and governing where applicable but when it comes to needing a miracle and supernatural intervention, reason has no place and gives no answers.** When it is time in your life for real faith to bear fruit of a life of righteous obedience, you need the authority of truth. The entire world, our nation, the media, our politicians, our educators, our psychologists, everyone is looking for answers. When exposed the world has the same answer the Pharisees gave Jesus. "We do not know what to do. We really do not have an answer. We cannot tell. We cannot see. Our authority is not real authority, only that of a deceiving, manipulating bully."

Will you be that people? Will your life bear the fruit of the authority and power of the Holy Spirit? God endow us once again with the authority of your Kingdom. Fill us once again as the disciples of old with the sovereign power of your Holy Spirit that moves the heavens, shakes the earth, and causes nations to call upon your name once again. Lord, make us a people who do not hide behind leaves, but let the glory of Your truth shine forth as a city that hungers for your righteousness. Lord of the harvest, send me. Make me a laborer in thy vineyard. Let me be a tree that bears fruit for the desire of the Master.