

Mark 11:1-12:12 | The In-Breaking Kingdom

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I don't think it is any coincidence that some of the English world's greatest stories come from men and women who understood the story of the gospel. In all reality the gospel is the mother of all stories. The plot of redemption, restoration and sacrifice has been dressed up, lit up and paraded across pages and screens but all of them are only attempting to grasp the slightest depth of the story of the gospel.

Two men who have done this best are C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. Tolkien's final book, "The Return of the King" really gets at this hope. This hope that we will see in our text today. In the book of Mark, we are starting chapter 11, and from this point out Jesus and his story is in Jerusalem and it is in Jerusalem where the King has come to set up his kingdom. All the fanfare of the "Return of the King" is only microscopic in comparison to the story King Jesus will be paying in the book of Mark.

What we are going to see tonight is three days in Jerusalem. But those three days are not just three days. Three times we are going to see Jesus come and go into Jerusalem but those three times are actual in breakings of the Kingdom of God. As Jesus comes, so does the kingdom.

Let me illustrate this. I used to work at Costco, and while I was there we ran a pretty clean shop, but every now and then corporate would come. And for those two days corporate was there, things were different. We cleaned deeper than we normally cleaned, we straightened things which were normally in disarray, we dressed different, and acted differently, but when corporate left, ultimately things went back to the way they were.

In one sense, as Jesus is coming into Jerusalem he is drastically changing what is expected. His kingdom is reshaping the order of things. But as we will see throughout the rest of the gospel, this Kingdom doesn't just leave with Jesus, but it is set up in a real, but not yet final way.

What we are going to see specifically tonight is: **The Kingdom of God is an expected kingdom filled with fruitful people established in Christ.** Let's pray.

We are very briefly going to look at these three in breakings of the Kingdom and at the end we are going to spend time looking at them in a different light.

What we are going to see first is: **The kingdom of God is an expected Kingdom.**

Mark 11:1-11

Here we have Jesus coming back to Jerusalem, and there are great crowds following him because if Jesus was going to set up his kingdom, if he was going to be king of the Jews, he had to first overthrow Rome from Jerusalem. So you can imagine the anticipation which comes as these crowds are laying down palm branches and crying out Hosanna! Blessed is the coming Kingdom of our father David.

Now Hosanna is a transliteration of a Hebrew word which literally means, "Save, we pray." These Jews are using a Jewish phrase to user in their Jewish King who they are hoping will be the next King David. David was Israel's greatest king, and here they are asking for David's kingdom to be reestablished.

And yet look at what happened when Jesus got into Jerusalem: **Mark 11:11**. He looked around and then left because it was late. You can imagine the irony of the crowds when they see Jesus riding into town on a borrowed donkey, but they could maybe get over that. But then he gets to the gates of Jerusalem, passes through them and rather than storming Herod's palace he looks around and heads home because he was getting tired. Jesus does nothing. Can you imagine the emotions of the crowds?

But here is the thing, Jesus did this because he is starting to show them that his kingdom is not what they expect it to be. The Kingdom is coming, but it doesn't look like you imagined it to. And the harsh reality of this is that from this moment on the crowds who follow Jesus at best begin to dwindle and go home, and at worst some of them will even begin to join the mob which will cry for his murder in this very town. As expected as the kingdom was it was unrecognizable to the Jews.

So Jesus went back to Bethany and the next day we see the next in breaking of the kingdom and we also see: **The Kingdom of God is an expected Kingdom filled with fruitful people.**

Mark 11:12-14.

Now this is kind of a weird interaction. Jesus wants food, goes to a fig tree and finds that there are no ripe figs on it and he curses it. The odd thing is that it is not yet the season for ripe fruit. So why does Jesus curse the tree? Because in the Kingdom of God there will always be fruit. It is always the season of growth and renewal and what this tree failed to realize is that it was held responsible for its actions in the Kingdom.

What this tree is illustrating is seen more clearly in the following passage: **Mark 11:15-18**

When understanding the Kingdom of God it is important to note the triumphal entry was not just an entrance into Jerusalem. We saw that the previous night. His entrance to Jerusalem was lackluster, but the triumphal entrance was actually the parade of the Kingdom into the temple. When Jesus was a child he was found in the temple learning, but as a man Jesus is coming back to do something different.

Jesus comes into the temple and starts overturning tables. In the gospel of John we see that he actually fashioned a whip to do this. I can only imagine what the disciples were thinking when Jesus began to make whip in the temple!

So why the outrage? Jesus not only overturned the tables but he also said he stopped anyone from being able to carry their sacrifices through the temple. Jesus brought a disturbance and he also brought a halt to the temple order. Why? Here is the thing the temple was set up in a very specific way. The outer court was called the court of the gentiles, this was the largest court. Past this court there was the court of the women, past that there was the court of Israel, and past that was the Holy of Holies. And it was in this court of the gentiles that this finance market was set up.

Because Jerusalem was a city, many people didn't have a farm from which to bring their animals to sacrifice so the temple system made it possible to buy animals from the temple. This in itself was not bad, the problem was that the temple rulers were charging exorbitant amounts making a prophet off of these sales. There were probably other trinkets and taxes that they would sell and collect in this place and it was not only extortion but it had completely disrupted any sort of worship which may have been happening in this court.

This wasn't that big of a deal for the rulers of the time because 1. They made a profit and 2. It kept the gentiles out. The good Jews could enter father into the temple to worship but the court of the gentiles was crowded and chaotic. This didn't bother them too much because the Jews were so caught up in their

nationalistic hopes they actually thought that when the Messiah would come he would purge the courts of the gentiles.

But Jesus' kingdom is not like the Jews kingdom: **Mark 11:17-18**. Rather than expelling the gentiles, Jesus rebukes the fruitless temple both for their extortion and also for their disruption of worship. They had put barriers in place of gentiles worshipping God. This temple was a fruitless as the fig tree it didn't look like the kingdom, didn't act like the kingdom and in John, Jesus prophesies that this temple would ultimately be destroyed just like the fig tree.

The next day when Jesus was coming back into Jerusalem, you can see in 20-26, the disciples saw the tree Jesus cursed withered. Jesus then said to them three things: have faith, pray, and forgive. These are three things that are normative in his kingdom. These are the three things that the men in the temple needed to do.

Now we are in the third day, the third in breaking of the kingdom into Jerusalem and the temple officials, mad at what had happened the day before, wanted to know: What gives Jesus the authority to do this?

We see this unfold in **Mark 11:27-33**.

You see the temple officials wanted to question Jesus, but instead it was Jesus who questioned them. He asked them about John the Baptist and the nature of his baptism. This stumped the officials because they feared the crowds but the point Jesus is making in this is that John spoke of him.

John spoke of the one who came after him, namely Jesus and Jesus is the man from heaven. Jesus doesn't split the two lines, Jesus brings them together in himself. And he is going to illustrate this innate authority in the following parable.

Mark 12:1-3. So are you tracking? The owner of the vineyard wants fruit from his laborers. Do you see that theme here? In the Kingdom of God, God desires fruit! He isn't into your best efforts he is into the rewards of his kingdom. And when the owners set a servant to get the fruit the people of the vineyard beat him and sent him away empty handed. This could be for two reasons, either they had produced no fruit, or they saw the fruit of the vineyard and wanted it for themselves not wanting to give authority or honor to anyone else.

Regardless of their reasoning the parable continues: **Mark 12:4-7**

This continues, the owner desires his rightful fruit, his due reward but the people of the vineyard refuse to acknowledge his right to their fruit. And then he sends his son.

The people look at the son and they see him as a cash cow. We kill the son, we get the vineyard. We kill the price, we inherit the kingdom.

The story continues: **Mark 12:8-12**.

Here is the thing here. On one hand Jesus is speaking to the Jewish officials and he is saying that because of Israel's hardheartedness, the kingdom is going to be given over the Gentiles. That's one meaning of this passage. But there is another. And that is this: for those of us who reject God's kingdom and God's rightful rule, you have not inherited the ability to rule your own life, you have only inherited the wrath of God and sealed your own death.

The reality of the kingdom of God is that whether you recognize it as being present or not you are held responsible for it. You are required to live in it either through anarchy and death, or willing submission and life.

Jesus said he wasn't going to answer the question of authority, but he just answered it.

Jesus has the authority over the Kingdom because it has been given to him by the father. Jesus is the king because he is the son of God. What we have just seen are three in breakings of what this kingdom is really like. But what we have also seen is Jesus radically redefining the hope of the whole Bible.

Look back at **Mark 12:6-11**. What does it mean that Jesus has become the cornerstone? What does it mean that this is a marvelous thing?

Jesus is quoting **Psalms 118:22-24**. This is a passage which would have been on the minds of the Jews during this time and here Jesus is using it and saying that through the death of the son, God is doing something marvelous.

This one passage reshapes the whole landscape of what we have just read. This is the final component of the kingdom we see tonight: **The Kingdom of God is an expected kingdom filled with fruitful people and established by Christ.**

Let's take this passage from the Psalm and move backwards looking at the temple, the fig tree, and the triumphal entry.

How does Christ reshape the temple: **Eph. 2:18-20**. You see the Jews thought that the temple would be the icon of the Jewish nation. When people viewed the temple they would see two things: The power of God and God's blessing to the Jews. But when Jesus came into the temple and disrupted the on goings of the sacrificial system, it wasn't a onetime thing, it was in breaking of a time where the sacrificial system would be completely stopped. It was representative of Christ who is the final sacrifice, and a sacrifice not only for the Jews, but for the whole world. And in so doing Jesus not only destroys the temple sacrificial system, but he destroys the temple himself: Jesus is the temple.

In Jesus the world sees the power of God and in Jesus we see God's blessing to all people. The presence of God is no longer confined to specific place and an ethnic people, the presence of God is for those who are found in Christ through faith.

How does Christ reshape the fruit tree? Jesus finds this tree lacking fruit even when it was not yet the season for mature fruit. But in the Kingdom of God we must produce fruit. In Zechariah, God is telling the prophet Zechariah to call the fruitless and stubborn people of Israel back to repentance. And to aide his message God gives him eight visions, but look at this vision he gives of Joshua the High Priest: **Zechariah 3:6-10**. That branch, is Christ. And before we ever are able to produce our own fruit, we must first come and sit under his tree. In the Bible Jesus is often referred to as the "firstfruit" and in Jesus we find our ability to produce fruit.

In Philippians Paul pleads with us to work out our own salvation in fear and trembling, to do hard work, to produce good fruit, but he also says this: **Phil. 1:6**. We must produce fruit, but we can only do so as a response to what Christ has already done. We must produce fruit not to merit or earn our salvation, but we must produce fruit because it is the natural sign of our salvation, and in Christ Jesus it is always the season for fruit.

Lastly, how does Jesus reshape the triumphal entry? We have already seen how disappointed the fanfare of this triumphal entry must have been. For hundreds of years the Jews were waiting for Jesus to come and set up the true kingdom, the real kingdom. And in a very real sense Jesus is about to do that. Jesus is going to set up the real and expected Kingdom but is going to look different than the Jews had hoped.

In crying out Hosanna, Hosanna in the Highest! The people were literally crying out “Save, we pray,” Jesus is the one who will save us. But they were then disappointed that he didn’t do something. But they missed it. Remember that cornerstone passage we looked at earlier? The one that I said reshaped everything, look at what comes next: **Psalm 118:22-25**

Save us we pray, literally, Hosanna.

The kingdom of God is established on Christ because Christ is the means of salvation. In Christ we are granted entrance to God’s merciful and wonderful rule. In Christ we find our greatest joy and happiness. In Christ we bear fruit, in Christ we have access to the father, in Christ we have a true and real salvation here in this present life, but also in the life to come.

My question to you is twofold: 1. Are you part of this kingdom. A kingdom which Christ says is built of faith and forgiveness. If not rejoice and be glad because today is the day of salvation. To not have faith, to reject Christ is to find yourself in the wrath of God just like the people in the vineyard were found to be in the wrath of the father.

2. Do you produce kingdom fruit? If you are part of Christ’s kingdom do you produce the fruit of Christ? Take up the fight, gaze at Christ and live. Fight sin, do good works, make disciples, evangelize, serve and worship. This is the Lord’s doing and it is marvelous in our eyes.