

Day 57 (Tuesday 30th October)

Read Mark Chapter 11 verses 1 to 11

Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

Events recorded by Mark so far have occupied a period of about 3 years. Except for a few verses, the whole remaining part of his gospel covers just 8 days. Everything now is about *why* God in Christ has come to us. Jesus openly enters Jerusalem as the promised Messiah, not a military ruler on a white horse but on the colt prophesied in Zechariah 9.9. Kings were peaceably proclaimed this way (1Kings 1.33). The people who had come with Him understood this, spread coats and branches on the road (as in 2Kings 9.13) and shouted Hosanna (literally 'Save now!') quoting Psalm 118.25. It was the very opposite of a Roman 'Triumph' procession in which the conquering general (having killed at least 5000 enemy soldiers already) led in his special prisoners for slaughter. 3000 people were saved in Peter's first speech after Pentecost (Acts 2.41), 5000 after the second (Acts 4.4).

Questions to think about

1. Jesus came as the Servant King (Mark 10. 45). How would He save His people?
2. The owner of the colt gave it to Jesus to use. Are there things we have, a car or talent maybe, that Jesus can use?
3. Jesus does not force His way into our lives. He stands at the door and knocks (Rev 3.20). How much of our lives have we let Him into?

A Prayer you may wish to say

Christ, the King of all, we joyfully welcome you into the whole of our lives. Take all we have and use it for your glory. Lead us in your triumphal procession of those you have saved by your death and resurrection. Amen

Day 58 (Wednesday 31st October)

Read Mark Chapter 11 verses 12 to 14

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

At this time of year, a fig tree should have shown an early crop of immature fruit. The fact it does not, means that no more fruit is going to come on it. Jesus states its future: no one will eat figs from it again. The fig tree was used in the Old Testament as a symbol of the nation of Israel. Jesus is symbolically passing judgement on Israel. It had received God's Word but failed to produce fruit from it. The promise to Abram (Abraham) had been "in you **all** the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12.3). Israel had tried to live according to God's commandments and, like all of us, failed.

Questions to think about

1. Is reading the Bible still a good thing to do even if it makes no difference to your life?
2. Does God always keep His promises?
3. How has God kept His promise to bless **all** the families of the earth?

A prayer you may wish to say

Christ have mercy upon us. We are sorry for all the times we have not responded to Your Word. Thank you that through Abraham's descendants, you came to be the Saviour of us all. Thank you that your promises never fail. Please cause us to bear fruit in our lives. Amen

Day 59 (Thursday 1st November)**Read Mark Chapter 11 verses 15 to 19**

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

The outer court of the Temple was where all nations were allowed to pray. It had become filled with traders however. Some made exorbitant profits on the sale of acceptable animals for sacrifice (even doves which were all that poor people could afford). Others did the same changing foreign coins into temple money to pay the temple tax. Worse still, what space was left was filled with people taking a short cut through the Temple to the Mount of Olives. Jeremiah had warned Israel about trusting in a corrupted Temple and Isaiah had reminded them of its purpose for all people. Lastly, Malachi had warned that the Lord would suddenly come to his temple. No one would be able to stand his coming but he would purify. (Malachi 3.1-4).

Questions to think about

1. What are we trusting in – our religious practice (what we do) or Christ?
2. Are we making outsiders feel immediately welcome in our church services?
3. We are God's Temple now (1Corinthians 3.16). Are we ready for Him to suddenly visit us?

A prayer you may wish to say

Lord Jesus Christ, you know everything in our hearts. Some things about ourselves just fill us with shame. Come into our lives we pray. Show us our sin. Drive out what is impure. All we can do is repent and put all our trust in you. Amen

Day 60 (Friday 2nd November)**Read Mark Chapter 11 verses 20 to 26**

The Lesson from the Withered Fig Tree

Jesus takes the opportunity to teach His disciples something about prayer as they pass the, now withered, fig tree. Some situations seem to us about as impossible to change as the position of a mountain. He mentions two of the things needed in our relationship with God: complete trust in Him and forgiveness of others as we are forgiven by God. A good Bible verse to remember is Zechariah 4.6&7: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of hosts. What are you, O great mountain?".

Questions to think about

1. Are we only praying for things we think are 'realistic'?
2. If our prayers can be so effective, how often should we be praying?
3. 'The purpose of prayer is not to get man's will done in heaven, but to get God's will done on earth'. How much of our praying is about what we want and how much is about what God wants?

A prayer you may want to say

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.....Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.....For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

Day 61 (Saturday 3rd November)**Read Mark Chapter 11 verses 27 to 33**

Jesus' Authority is Questioned

From Jesus as The Servant-Judge at the fig tree and in The Temple, Mark turns to Jesus as the Servant-Prophet. True prophets speak God's words. The Jewish leaders had a responsibility to decide if prophets really were from God by seeing whether what they said proved true (Deuteronomy 18.15-22). Their problem though was they had already made up their minds and just wanted evidence to condemn Jesus. John the Baptist had declared Christ's authority ('Prepare the way of the Lord', Mark 1.3) but the leaders had not believed him. God does not answer questions when He has already told us the answer, especially if our questions are really just an attempt to stay popular and not be shown up.

Questions to think about

1. Do we ever say "we don't know" as an excuse?
2. Where can we look first to see what God has already said about something?
3. On what authority *was* Jesus acting and speaking?

A prayer you may want to say

Lord, open our hearts to understand and accept what you have already said to us in the Bible. Speak to us now through your Word we pray. We humbly bow to your authority. You are our Lord and we want to live lives directed by You. Amen

Day 62 (Sunday 4th November)**Read Mark Chapter 12 verses 1 to 12**

The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

Like the fig tree, the vineyard is another commonly used picture of Israel in the Old Testament. The 'story' behind the parable was clear to the listeners. God had 'planted' His people in the land of Canaan. He had lovingly cared for them. They however had refused to acknowledge His Lordship and just lived for themselves. They had abused and killed God's messengers, the prophets and were now on the point of killing His Son. Judgement would come in AD70 with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. 'Builders' should have recognised the most important 'stone' (Jesus) but everything (the universal church) would now be built upon it.

Questions to think about

1. To what extent are we living for ourselves and ignoring God's messages to us?
2. Are we living as a church as if all we do is built upon our faith in Christ?
3. Who has built, and is building, the church? (verse 11)

A prayer you may want to say

Lord God and our loving Heavenly Father, we are sorry for the times we ignored what you were saying to us and just lived for our own benefit. Have mercy upon us. Build us up upon the amazing foundation of your Son, Jesus Christ. Increase our faith and use us to bear fruit for your name. Amen

Day 63 (Monday 5th November)

Read Mark Chapter 12 verses 13 to 17

The Question about Paying Taxes

Still people were questioning Jesus, not because they sought answers but because they wanted an excuse. Jesus had said some pretty hard things to them. Whether it was right to pay Roman taxes was another case of some people being antagonised whichever way Jesus answered. His response silenced both Pharisees (anti Rome) and Herodians (pro Rome). People tend to argue about what the rightful claim of governments to our taxes is, but ignore completely the rightful claims on us of God.

Questions to think about

1. To how much of our lives does God have a rightful claim?
2. “You are sincere, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth.” (verse 14)
Would that be true of us?
3. Should we try to please everyone, all the time? If not, what should be our attitude to others?

A prayer you may want to say

Teacher, you have the words of eternal life: help us to listen and understand. The whole of our lives belongs to you: help us to let you in to every part. Give us, we pray, your love and care for all people. Help us to present in our lives the good news of your gospel, even when some people appear hardened against it. Amen