

Mark 11:1-33**Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King**

11 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, ² saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’”

⁴ They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, ⁵ some people standing there asked, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” ⁶ They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. ⁷ When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. ⁹ Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,

“Hosanna!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

¹⁰ “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!”

“Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

¹¹ Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

Jesus Curses a Fig Tree and Clears the Temple Courts

¹² The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. ¹³ Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ Then he said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard him say it.

¹⁵ On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, ¹⁶ and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. ¹⁷ And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’”

¹⁸ The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

¹⁹ When evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

²⁰ In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. ²¹ Peter remembered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!”

²² “Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. ²³ “Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. ²⁴ Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. ²⁵ And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.” [26]

The Authority of Jesus Questioned

²⁷ They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. ²⁸ “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you authority to do this?”

²⁹ Jesus replied, “I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. ³⁰ John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!”

³¹ They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ ³² But if we say, ‘Of human origin’ ...” (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.)

³³ So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.”

Jesus said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”

Please have your **Bibles opened** at – **Mark 11 starting at v1.**

There’s an **outline** for you to take **notes**. Let me **pray** first.

Let’s pray...

Intro

So far in Mark's Gospel – Jesus has revealed who He is to His disciples but He's gone out of His way to conceal who He is to the general public.

But in chapter 11 – Jesus goes public – and the gloves are off – especially with the religious leaders!

[Slide-Assessment]

And we read in V11 - *Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts.*
He looked around at everything...

Jesus rides into Jerusalem with the authority as King of Heaven and Earth and **He looks at everything** – and **makes an assessment** of Israel's faith and religious practices and it's not great!

In the rest of the chapter, we see the results of this assessment.

[Slide-FCF]

Now – when we read the Bible – one of the things we should be doing is asking ourselves – where are WE in this Bible passage.

And one of the ways we can find out where WE are in a Bible passage is to look at the **Fallen Condition** we share with the people in the passage.

By Fallen Condition – I mean – because of Adam and Eve's original sin and rebellion against God – we have inherited sin – and all of us share in this fallen condition.

As we ask ourselves about this fallen condition, this morning, we will see **what genuine faith looks like!**

Mark 11:1–11

We pick up the story in vv1-2, as Jesus approaches Jerusalem and He arranges for His disciples to bring Him a colt of a donkey.

And as Jesus rides into Jerusalem on this donkey. He rides in as a King - not as military king – but as a humble King - a King who would bring peace – who came to serve – not be served – a King who would in less than a week’s time lay down His life for His people.

The people cheer Him in a frenzy – they lay down cloaks and branches (vv7-8) and shout “*Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!*” (v9)

Hosanna means “*Save us now!*” but do the crowd really know what Jesus is saving them from?

[Slide-1st point]

My 1st point this morning is **Genuine faith trusts Jesus as Saviour of our souls, not just a solver of our problems!**

Like the crowd, we often come to Jesus hoping He’ll solve our problems — heal our body, fix our family, restore our comfort, or bless our plans — but sometimes we resist His call to repent of our sins; sometimes we fail to obey His teaching and sometimes we ignore His call to be holy.

Just as the people of Israel longed for freedom from Roman occupation, we can put our hope in the **latest political power – like the next PM - or put our hope in our national identity or culture** – thinking this will advance God’s kingdom.

When we think God's purposes depend on a political party, or on our nation or culture, we are bit like the crowd - confused about the kind of King, Jesus is!

Some of the crowd that shouted "***Hosanna!***" on that first Palm Sunday shouted "***Crucify Him!***" by the following Friday.

Like the crowd, we can worship Jesus on Sunday and forget about Him by Friday!

Superficial faith only follows Jesus when we receive blessings; whereas genuine faith follows Jesus wherever He leads and whatever suffering comes our way.

The crowd's agenda was to put their hope of freedom from the Romans onto Jesus as a conquering victorious King not realizing His mission was suffering and sacrifice on a cross to bring salvation from sin and death!

Likewise perhaps our agenda is to see Jesus a bit like a genie in a bottle at our beck and call!

We're tempted to want *a crown without a cross* — but we only receive a crown *because He went to the cross!*

The people waved branches to welcome a King they thought would conquer their enemies. Genuine faith bows before the King who conquers the **real enemies of sin, of self, and of death!**

Mark 11:12–14, 20–21

Next in vv12-14 – Jesus is hungry and comes across a fig tree with leaves but no fruit. The leaves advertised that the early tiny figs of spring should be there – before the main harvest of figs in summer/autumn.

The tree gave all the impression that it should have fruit – but there was nothing!

The tree represented Israel and especially the religious leaders – they had the outward appearance of religious faith – but inside they had little or no faith.

So Jesus cursed the fruitless fig tree in verse 14 – for false advertising!

Later on in vv20-21 – the tree Jesus cursed had withered – demonstrating just as a leafy tree without fruit is worthless – so is someone who professes to have faith but shows no evidence of it! As the Apostle James says “*faith without works is dead faith!*” (James 2:17)

[Slide-2nd point]

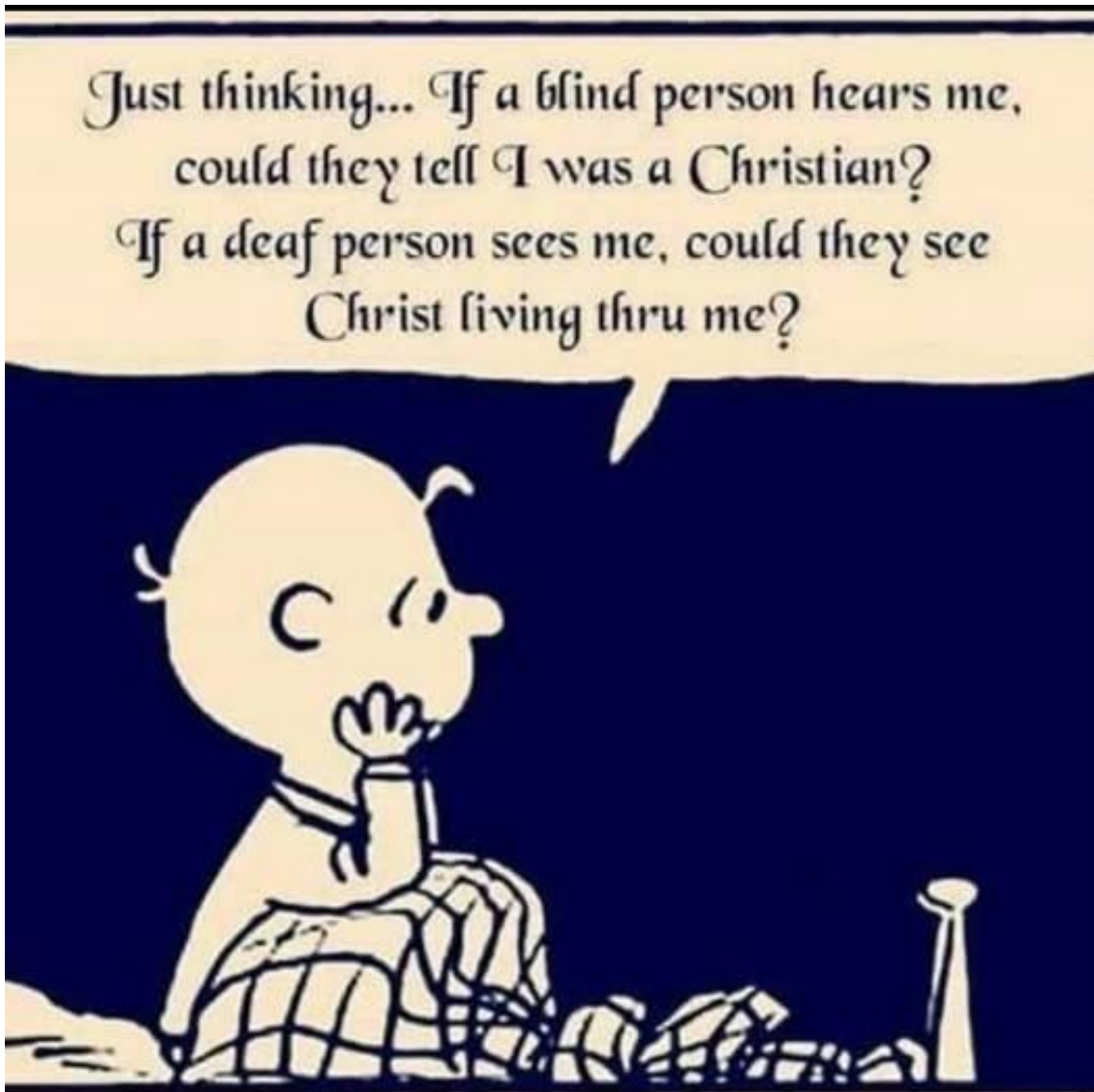
My 2nd point - Genuine faith produces living fruit!

As we look at ourselves – are we like the fig tree – plenty of leaves – promising fruit – but we don’t produce any?

Some questions we could ask ourselves this morning:

- Do people see the fruit of the spirit in me? love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control?
- Do I produce fruit of love, justice, mercy, generosity and prayerfulness
- Do I pray and read the Bible daily?
- Do I share my faith with others?
- As Charlie Brown says...

[Slide-Charlie Brown]



- Would people at work, at our club, in our street - know we were Christians?
- Most of you will remember **Jerry and Aileen Moss** – Aileen used to say quite regularly at Bible Study that the neighbours in her street called them “***the Churchie ones!***” – the neighbours knew Jerry and Aileen were Christians – **by their fruit?** What about us?

(pause)

Mark 11:15–19

Next Jesus comes to the temple area v15

And the temple courts are like Toukley Markets

There are people buying and selling in the temple courts. Yes, people needed to buy animals for their sacrifices – but not inside the temple courts - which were supposed to be where people prayed.

And on top of that – because people had to pay a temple tax in the temple currency – moneychangers were ripping people off – by charging exorbitant exchange rates!

Jesus got very angry (v15) and overturned their tables and stopped people carrying merchandise into the temple courts (v16)

The people were making sacrifices and their religion looked busy and impressive but it was just ritual and not heartfelt or genuine!

[Slide-3rd point]

My 3rd point - **Genuine faith worships to honour God, not us!**

Like the temple filled with noise and busyness, our worship can become about ***entertainment and atmosphere*** rather than the ***presence of God***.

We can focus more on how worship ***looks*** and ***feels*** than on ***who*** worship is for.

We can begin to measure worship by ***our experience*** rather than ***glorifying God!***

We can fall into the same trap as the traders in the temple, when we follow God mainly for what we can **get** — blessings, success, peace, or comfort — rather than simply because He is **worthy of our praise**.

When worship becomes “**What can God do for me?**” instead of “**How can I honour God?**”, we share the same fallen condition as the traders!

The temple was full of people busy with rituals — yet Jesus said it should be a “**house of prayer**.” (v17)

We too can fill our lives and churches with **programs, traditions, and tasks** while neglecting prayer, repentance, and communion with God.

Busyness in God’s house is not the same as intimacy with God Himself.

Jesus rebuked them for turning the worship place into a “**den of robbers**.” (v17)

Today, churches can also drift towards **consumerism** — with branding, marketing, and competition — **treating faith like a product to sell rather than a gift of grace**.

The temple courts that Jesus cleansed were meant to be open for **Gentiles** — a place for all nations to seek God.

But the trading prevented proper worship and prayer - and prevented genuine seekers from coming to pray and worship God.

We can make the same mistake when our church culture or personal attitudes **shuts others out** through our pride, tradition, exclusiveness or self-interest.

Genuine worship always has **open doors** and **open hearts** for **everyone**!

The religious leaders (v18) were not happy with Jesus cleansing the temple – in fact they were afraid of Jesus and looked for a way to kill Him because the crowd were amazed at Jesus' teaching.

You see the religious leaders could see their status and position and popularity slipping away from them, because Jesus' teaching, authority and popularity were far superior to theirs!

The religious leaders' faith and worship was all about them and not about God! We can fall for that same mistake if we make our worship about us – rather than God.

Genuine faith worships to honour God, not us!

Mark 11:22–24

Having used the cursed fig tree to show that faith without any fruit is dead faith – Jesus then teaches His disciples about genuine faith, prayer and forgiveness in vv22-24

[Slide-4th point]

My 4th point - Genuine faith trusts fully in God's power to act!

Jesus says (v22) our faith is to be in God – not in ourself

And Jesus teaches that - if our faith is genuine and doesn't doubt – mountains can be moved! (v23)

Now this could be literal – because **God can do anything!**

But the idea of “moving mountains” is a Jewish phrase that means “removing obstacles or problems we face”

Jesus is teaching (v24) our prayers must be offered with believing hearts and without doubting – and trusting in God’s power to move mountains and do the impossible. As we’ve said many times – God is in the miracle business!

Now we should not interpret v24 – as meaning if we pray hard enough and really believe, God is obliged to answer our prayer whatever we ask. This kind of faith is not faith in God, but rather faith in our faith – or faith in our feelings or desires. All prayer is conditional upon it being God’s will – and that God sees what we asking is good for us or good for the people we are praying for!

And how do we know what God’s will is?

Well - if what we are praying agrees with God’s Word; then it’s God’s will.

For example – we can pray for marriages, broken relationships, repentance, forgiveness, people to believe in Jesus – they are all God’s will.

Some things are not so clear – if we pray for a new job, or whether to move house, or make a purchase – we may have to pray for God to make it clear – to open or close the door - so that we know!

We also have an extra question we can ask – whether what we are praying for – will ***bring glory to God!***

Genuine faith trusts fully in God’s power to act!

Mark 11:25–26

Jesus also makes a further point about our prayers of faith in v25 – if we go to pray and have a grudge or unforgiving heart – that will hamper our prayer – so we must forgive – so that our Father in Heaven forgives us.

[Slide-5th point]

So my 5th point is - **Genuine faith shows grace by forgiving others!**

I find it staggering – when someone says “*I’ll never forgive that person for what they did*”. Because God gave His Son up to die for **ALL our sins** – and this person can’t forgive **ONE sin** that has been committed against them!

Jesus’ point is that genuine faith forgives – just as God showed us grace – and forgives us in Jesus!

When we forgive we are saying God showed mercy to me – I will show mercy to the one who wronged me!

Mark 11:27–33

With all that’s gone on with Jesus riding into Jerusalem as King and Promised Messiah – and Jesus’ cleansing of the temple.

The religious leaders (vv27-28) – come to Jesus – and want to know “*by what authority is Jesus doing these things*” and “*who gave Him this authority*”

Basically, they are **questioning Jesus’ authority!**

[Slide-6th point]

My 6th point is - **Genuine faith submits to Jesus’ authority; without questioning Him!**

Jesus answered their question with His own question [I get in trouble for doing that!]

His question in V30 – “*John’s Baptism – was it from Heaven or from human origin?*”

By doing this:

- Jesus exposed the religious leaders' spiritual blindness and dishonesty.
- Jesus also linked His own ministry with John the Baptist, who had testified that Jesus was the Messiah (Mark 1:7–8).
- And Jesus forced them to confront **the question of divine authority versus human authority**—if they rejected John's divine commission, they would also reject Jesus' divine commission. If they accepted John's divine commission, they must accept Jesus' divine commission too!

The religious leaders are in a dilemma (vv31-32)

As they discussed Jesus' reply amongst themselves, they realized they were trapped:

- If they said John's Baptism was "*from heaven*" Jesus would ask, "*Then why didn't you believe John?*"
- If they said John's Baptism was "*of human origin*" then they feared the crowd, who believed John was a true prophet from God.

They were caught between losing credibility with the people or condemning themselves for not believing. They were in a no win situation!

All they can do is answer Jesus with "*we don't know*"

They were deliberately evading His question when they knew the truth but refused to acknowledge it because it threatened their position and pride.

Their refusal to accept Jesus showed they cared more about public opinion and power than about the truth from God and about obedience to God

Genuine faith submits to Jesus' authority; without questioning Him.

If we have genuine faith – we NEVER question Jesus' authority.

It reminds me of the thief on the cross next to Jesus – whom Jesus promised would be in paradise with Jesus that very day!

The thief didn't get baptized, go to a church or synagogue, didn't go to Sunday School, or learn catechism. Why was He allowed to go to Heaven?

Because Jesus said so!

Genuine faith submits to Jesus' authority – because what Jesus says is the final word!

F.A.I.T.H. – stands for **F**orsaking **A**LL **I** **T**rust **H**im!

[Story of egg and bacon]

Conclusion

[Slide-Conclusion]

As Jesus looked around Jerusalem and the Temple that day – **His assessment was the religion of Judaism and the Temple sacrificial system had failed its true purpose!** It wasn't honouring God and it wasn't showing living fruit!

If Jesus rode into Toukley today...

What would Jesus' assessment be of us individually and as a Church?

(pause)

As I prepared this week – I was convicted about my own lack of faith.

I was feeling tired and overwhelmed – preparing for an Aged Care service at Norah Head, preparing a sermon, preparing for scripture and Jaffa, preparing for Bible study and a funeral tomorrow. I even complained to Heather – I need

to think about whether I can keep doing Aged Care services – it takes up more of my time – and it's becoming too much!

Anyway, I showed up at the Age Care service – and the service went well. After the service, I discovered one of the ladies who regularly attended and enjoyed the service each time - had passed away!

I thought about how this lady had been spiritually fed at each service and was preparing for Heaven!

And also thought, what if there's someone at the service who doesn't know Jesus? Or someone who is afraid of dying – and I stop doing these services?

I was convicted! I was only thinking of myself – not about glorifying God – not about serving others. I didn't have faith that God could move the mountain of me being tired and overwhelmed!

So I took a good look at myself in the mirror that night - and gave myself a huge uppercut!

I pray these fallen conditions we've looked at this morning will help you – and when you go home – like me – you can look in the mirror – and give yourself an uppercut too!

Let's pray...

Heavenly Father

*Your son is the rightful King who comes to us in humility,
yet with holy authority and searching eyes.*

*Forgive us when our faith is only leaves without fruit —
when we honour You with our lips but not with our lives.*

*By Your Spirit, make our hearts a true house of prayer,
our worship pure, our faith alive,
and our service fruitful in Your kingdom.*

*Teach us to bear the fruit of repentance, love, and obedience,
so that in all we do, Your glory is revealed.*

*Father enable us to be faithful servants of King Jesus who gave His life for us. In
His name, we pray. Amen.*

Benediction (John 15:5, 8)

Jesus says: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing... This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” Amen