# Mark 11:12-25

### Josh Sharpe

Early in the morning Jesus is on his way back into Jerusalem, from Bethany. He is hungry and from a distance he sees a fig tree that is covered with leaves. Fig trees are an abundant source of food when they yield their fruit, which is usually twice a year. Even though the trees had another month until they normally started to produce fruit, Jesus, to his delight, sees this tree in the distance covered in leaves.

Leaves indicated that there should be fruit lingering on the branches. But to Jesus’ disappointment, he arrives at the tree to realize that this tree had deceived him. Though it gave the appearance of having life and the offer of life to others through its branches, it was fruitless. There was nothing but emptiness, deceiving all those who came to it looking for life. There was nothing fruitful under the leaves.

Immediately after this passage, Jesus goes straight into the temple. The temple represented a place where God’s presence dwelled and people from all around the world could come and find life. Upon entering, instead of finding the life-giving presence of God, he encounters something drastically different. What was supposed to be a place of blessing was now only harming the people. This place from afar looked to travelers as though it had spiritual life to offer inside its walls but it was like the fig tree being barren of anything refreshing to the soul.

In both cases of the fig tree and the temple Jesus is angered and lashes out curses. The fig tree was a symbolic object lesson representing God’s people and what was taking place in the temple. The temple was to be where people from every nation should have found refreshment in the presence of God. From a distance, people would have seen its grandeur and would have been struck with excitement and anticipation about God's glory within. Unfortunately, as we walk alongside Christ in the week leading up to His death, what was intended to be fruitful was really empty. God’s own people had allowed their sins to turn it into a deceptive mirage that offered nothing that God intended.

What the people didn’t realize is that in just a few days Jesus would nullify the need for this temple. At His death, darkness will overshadow the temple, the earth will shake it at its foundation, and the veil separating God from the nations will be torn. In His resurrection, there will be a new people of God, Christians, who will be the new temples that carry God’s presence everywhere they go. They will be the branches that are connected to the vine (Jesus) and offer spiritual life to the world.

In the days that approach, Jesus will solve this problem once and for all. Except maybe not. As the church, we are still called to produce fruit and offer spiritual life to those that don’t have it. We too must be careful not to fall into the temptation of becoming a tree with no fruit or a temple that takes rather than gives life.

We must never become a people or a place that gives an appearance of hope only.

The way we do this is to make sure that our heart and our message is focused on the life that is found in Jesus Christ alone. Because of his death that paid the penalty for our sins and His resurrection that defeated death for us, we can not simply appear to life-giving, but be filled with an abundance of fruit.

It is only in Christ that we can find and offer true life.