

Matthew 21:20-46

Tuesday Part 1: Jesus the Cornerstone

21:20-22 – Fig Tree

Jesus never misses a teachable moment with His disciples. Here Jesus uses the withered fig tree as an opportunity to teach His disciples about the power of God.

In referring to the mountains being moved we encounter the phrase “be lifted up”. This phrase is taken from a common Hebrew saying of the time. The Hebrew phrase is “rooter of mountains”. It was a phrase given to great teachers that could solve problems and seemingly do the impossible. Jesus is using this phrase to teach His disciples that they have unlimited power through Him.

What could limit our ability to access this power in Christ? Selfishness. James 4:3 reveals this problem: ³*You ask and don't receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.* (CSB) Jesus will give us anything we ask...according to His will. 1 John 5:14-15: ¹⁴*This is the confidence we have before him: If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.* ¹⁵*And if we know that he hears whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked of him.* (CSB)

The MacArthur NT Commentary on Matthew sums up this section with these words:

Mountain-moving faith is unselfish, undoubting, and unqualified confidence in God. It is believing in God's truth and God's power while seeking to do God's will. The measure of such faith is the sincere and single desire that, as Jesus said, "the Father may be glorified in the Son". (page 281) God does not build His church or build up His people by better ideas, better programs, or better methods, although such things can have a place in His work. God promises to truly reveal His power only through faithful believers who, in persistent prayer, seek only His will. (page 282)

Discussion Questions

- ❖ Do you ever approach God with selfish motives?
- ❖ What are some ways God's will can be different than our own will?
- ❖ Why is it important to remember that God's will is better than our will?
- ❖ Do you truly believe that God's will is your ultimate good even when it conflicts with your personal desires?

21:23-27 – Authority

Authority is a “sensitive” topic. Often people love having authority but hate submitting to authority. The Pharisees hated submitting to authority, therefore, naturally they wanted to know where Jesus' authority came from. They are asking this question because they believe He had no authority.

It has become common place for people to challenge Jesus' authority. Even as believers we do this every day. At times it is unknowingly and other times it is out right rebellion. How do we challenge His authority? Any and every time we ignore or disobey Scripture. God's Word as given us a clear outline on marriage, sexual morality, loving others, sharing the gospel, attending church, using our spiritual gifts for the edification of the body, putting God first, reading and meditating upon Scripture, praying and so much more.

Like Jesus has been commonly doing with the Pharisees, He asks them an impossible question; which they refused to answer. Their denial and fear kept them from answering the question. They were denying Jesus was the actual Messiah and they feared the people. As we slowly drift away from the God...denial and fear will take root quickly. Today, we see Christians denying all sorts of truths about God and this has led them to compromise with the culture out of fear of being rejected or treated as outcasts. For example: (1) many Christians have turned from a biblical

view of marriage and gender, therefore, out of fear they have openly accepted the culture's understanding of these topics.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ Why is it difficult to submit to authority at times?
- ❖ How do we as believers unknowingly challenge Jesus' authority?
- ❖ How do we as believers knowingly challenge Jesus' authority?
- ❖ Why is it dangerous to deny the truths found in Scripture?
- ❖ How does fearing the culture cause us to compromise our beliefs?

21:28-32 – Actions over Words

Our actions reveal more about who we are and what we truly believe than our words ever will. The book of James speaks to this very concept in chapter 2 verse 18: *18 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without works, and I will show you faith by my works* (CSB).

People can say all day long they believe in God and love God. But if their actions never support their words...then we must ask if their faith is genuine. In this parable we learn that your background doesn't matter. Prostitutes, tax collectors, haters of God and the like can experience the saving grace of the gospel. Your background is irrelevant...what matters is your response to the gospel.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ Do your actions support your word about your faith? How?
- ❖ Why does how you respond to the gospel matter more than your past?

21:33-46 – Jesus the Cornerstone

Jesus used a parable to teach the Pharisees that they were misusing what God had given them. God had provided the temple for His people to worship. The leaders of the temple (the Pharisees) had so corrupted the temple that worship wasn't happening. They had taken a gift from God and destroyed it with their selfish, wicked ways.

How are you using the gifts God has given you? For His glory or for selfish ambitions? Selfishness will always lead you to sinful actions. God hasn't gifted you for your own personal gain. You haven't been given things to "make a name for yourself". You have been gifted by God for His glory. So that you can more fully worship His in truth and in spirit.

Jesus quotes Psalm 118 to speak of Himself as the cornerstone. What is the cornerstone? The cornerstone was the foundation of the building. If removed or damaged the whole building would crumble. Jesus is the cornerstone of our faith. Everything that we can or will be in faith is built upon Him. Our faith is only as strong as the foundation. We cannot build our faith on our goodness, works, knowledge or abilities. This is why every other religion or belief system will fail. Not everyone will "make it to heaven". Without Christ there is no salvation. Psalm 118 calls on us to rejoice because God has made a way through Christ. Psalm 118:22-24: *22 The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. 23 This came from the Lord; it is wondrous in our sight. 24 This is the day the Lord has made; let's rejoice and be glad in it.* (CSB)

This is the day the Lord has made...rejoice. Rejoice that we have hope in Christ. Rejoice that we have life in Christ. Rejoice that God has shown us mercy in Christ. Rejoice.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ How are you using what God has given you for His glory?
- ❖ Why is it so tempting to use what we have for personal, often selfish, gains?
- ❖ Who should our faith be built upon...ourselves or Jesus? Why?
- ❖ Why should we, as believers, be rejoicing?