

FAITH IN THE WILL OF GOD

Mark 11:12-26

(Jesus with His disciples)

"Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again." And His disciples heard it. So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. Then He taught, saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching. When evening had come, He went out of the city. Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away." So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.'"

Our passage of Scripture for today appears to be several separate teachings of Jesus' but we're going to look at how these four teachings actually do all tie together and that it was not by coincidence that they are successive in Mark 11. Similarly, an example of such a succession of teachings being tied together can be found also in the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son in Luke 15. A passage of Scripture then should always be looked at in context. First to the surrounding text, then within the paragraph, and then to the chapter and then to the book as a whole, and then ultimately how that passage of Scripture ties in with God's Word as a whole unit. We should also always keep in mind that God's Word, the Holy Bible, is especially showing us, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, God's redemptive plan for His chosen people. And that redemptive plan is not a how-to, in making us

into our own gods, and it is not just a way to get us to be saved and have eternal life in heaven. There is but one God Almighty of whom it can be said, "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created." (**Revelation 4:11**) And we who were created by God, are not just here waiting around for that promised eternal life in Christ Jesus. **We are to live by faith, which is the will of God.**

A problem that the Christian church has cultivated over the years is in witnessing to others we have asked the questions, "are you saved" or "do you know where you are going when you die"? While those questions are innocuous in and of themselves, meaning they aren't necessarily going to cause harm, the real question can be this, "do you KNOW Jesus as your Savior and Lord?" Or more simply put, "do you know Jesus?" The response of the person being asked that question will likely reveal right away whether they really do have a relationship with God the Father and His Son Jesus; or not. If a person responds with "yes, He died for our sins", that sounds good on the surface but that doesn't answer the question on whether they KNOW Him. What this all has to do with our passage of Scripture for today from Mark 11 is this: If you KNOW Jesus, if you have a healthy and vibrant relationship with Him, reading God's Word and spending time with Him in prayer, you will be bearing fruit, you will develop a faith that can move mountains (figuratively speaking of course) and you will be operating in what Jesus said was the great commandment, "the first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.'" (**Mark 12:29-31**) A representation of the fulfilling of that can be seen in the Old Testament way of describing a husband knowing his wife. The most expressive form of that in the Bible is in the Song of Solomon where there is an intense longing between the bridegroom and the bride and vice-versa. It is in the intimate knowing of one for the other. The relationship that God is calling us to demands from us to live by faith. Faith can be interchanged with trust. We have to believe in God's promises and trust that He has the perfect plan and He will get us to where He is leading us.

God's redemptive plan is first and foremost a way that God has provided for us to be restored back into a right relationship with Him, to bringing us into not just a fellowship with Him, but an intimate fellowship with Him and His Son Jesus, and then also, spiritually speaking, with all of God's other chosen people. As the Apostle John stated, "that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And

these things we write to you that your joy may be full." Yes, God's chosen people WILL inherit eternal life. As Jesus said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:16-17) That passage of Scripture too can be taken out of context to mean, "believe in Jesus, have eternal life." What Jesus said right after that is this, "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God." (John 3:18-21)

Yes, we are the moth to Jesus' flame. To those who ARE seeking the truth, Jesus IS the truth. Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Jesus IS the way to eternal life but notice how Jesus points us to Him being the Way to God the Father.

It has been said that God's Word, that is the Holy Bible, is God's message to His chosen people, His instruction manual to us, even that it is His love letter to us, so to speak. It is God's way of revealing Himself to His people and His way of explaining Himself and His Ways to His chosen people. I say, His chosen people, since as Jesus said, "For many are called but few chosen." (Matthew 20:16) What does that mean? As Jesus pointed out, not everyone will accept God's plan of salvation for His people. Not everyone will accept God for who He is and that as Jesus said that He is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" and that no one comes to the Father except through Him. God is perfect in all His ways and so not everyone desires to live in God's ways of holiness and righteousness. Jesus said, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:48) To be perfect is to be perfect in holiness and righteousness. Holiness can be described as the character of a person and then righteousness is the ways of a person. God is Holy because that is just who He is. God is Righteous because that is God's Ways. As we all hopefully know though, with mankind, that means all of us, "There is none righteous, no, not one." (Romans 3:10) There is none who are righteous in all of their ways and there is therefore none who are holy as God is holy. Once again, God alone is perfect and holy and righteous-in all His ways. That has to be our starting point of understanding. Without a complete understanding that God alone is perfectly holy and righteous we will spend a lifetime in frustration

and failure, never being able to match up to what God tells us of who we should be and what we should do.

Yet Jesus said, "**you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.**" The apostle Peter reveals to us that "as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."" How can that be? How can we be perfect and holy as God is holy? In Christ alone! For that IS the will of God.

So let's take a look at our passage of Scripture for today and how it all ties in with our relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ His only begotten Son. First, we have Jesus going up to a fig tree and looking for fruit on it. John Mark, that is the author of the gospel of Mark even tells us that it is not the season for figs. There has been much discussion about why Jesus cursed the fig tree even though it was not at the time that figs would be produced, yet what is generally agreed upon is that Jesus was hungry and from far off He saw a fig tree with leaves. It should have had fruit on it if it was full of leaves. It was clearly a message being sent by Jesus to those religious leaders who had the appearance of being religious, of being God's people, but they weren't bearing the fruit of that. It is as the Apostle Paul said of those people as "having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!" (**2 Timothy 3:5**) For us, as Christians, who have believed on Christ, who are being led in Christ in His Way, Truth, and Life, we WILL be bearing fruit. Paul said "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (**2 Corinthians 5:17**) That means that we must be born-again as Jesus put it (**John 3:3**), which means to be born of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit (**John 3:6**) Both of those things Jesus said about being born-again and how that means to be born of the Spirit were just before what He said in **John 3:16-17** about believing on Christ for eternal life. More fully explained, it is what the Apostle John says in **John 1:12**, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." Yes, it is revealed to us by the Holy Spirit that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (**Matthew 16:16**), as Peter proclaimed, but then we are to receive Christ, the Spirit of Christ as Paul said, "Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His." (**Romans 8:9**) A positive spin on that is this, "**He who has the Son has life**; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (**1 John 5:12**)

The religious leaders at the time of Jesus claimed to be God's people but they weren't bearing the fruit of being God's people otherwise they would not have rejected God's Son, Jesus. For us today, when we believe on Christ, when we are born-again, receiving His Holy Spirit, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are

children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be **glorified together.**" (Romans 8:16-17) Glorified together! Let that sink into your heart. "If indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be **glorified together.**" Just before that Paul says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." (Romans 8:14) In what way are we led by the Holy Spirit? In bearing fruit! Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, **bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.**" (John 15:5-8) The Apostle Paul explained that the fruit of the Spirit is "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22-23) Against such there is no law." We have a saying that, "we are called to share the love and the gospel of Jesus Christ". As was already mentioned in the Words of Jesus, we are to love God and love our neighbors which encompasses all of the laws of God. Perhaps a more to the point way of saying what we as Christians are called to is in sharing Christ with others and as the Holy Spirit works in us we are led to operate in the fruit of the Spirit.

The next part of our passage of Scripture is in where Jesus goes to the temple and then drives out the money changers, overturning their tables and He wouldn't even allow anyone to come in that was selling stuff. Then Jesus said, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" The temple of God is to be a house of prayer. As we know from Scripture our bodies are a temple of God, as we have the Holy Spirit dwelling inside of us. WE are to be a house of prayer. Now I've heard it said, and unfortunately I've also heard it preached that we don't have to attempt to abide in Christ as we are already abiding in Christ with His Holy Spirit that dwells in us. Let me ask you this? Have you had a period in your life, that even though you profess to be a Christian, when you don't spend time in prayer and in reading God's Word that you seem to slowly or maybe not so slowly seem to have gotten off on the wrong path? If we are not spending time in fellowship with God our Father or His Son Jesus then it a most certain and likely scenario to where you end up not only NOT bearing fruit in Christ but you end up going back to the same place you were at before Jesus entered your life and heart. I've been there. It's a miserable place to be.

Have you ever gotten in the habit of spending time in the mornings reading God's Word and praying and then one day you get in a hurry and think, "oh well I have to get going" but then you realize the

difference like something is just off? I even experience that when all I'm doing is studying God's Word and I'm not actually fellowshiping with God in that. We are not being called into a religion full of rituals and practices. We are called into fellowship with God, Jesus, and with each other, to be one in Christ. Jesus' prayer before He was to die on a cross for our sins, reveals to us the heart of God, "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." (John 17:19-21) Being sanctified by His truth! The Word of God isn't just words on pages unless that is how we are looking at it. "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12) The Word of God is intended to be God's way in ministering to us, changing our hearts, renewing our minds, sanctifying us in Christ Jesus-which means setting us apart in God's holiness. When we are praying to God we are expecting Him to hear us, as we are children of His. When we're reading His Word we should anticipate the Holy Spirit to be speaking to us, or ministering to us. One thing I can testify to is that the less time I spend in prayer and the Word the more I resemble Todd and the more time I spend in prayer and the Word the more I resemble what the Apostle Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

That leads us to the next thing Jesus mentioned in that if we have the faith of a mustard seed we would be able to move a mountain. Since I have yet to hear of anyone moving a literal mountain, as I'm sure there have been many who have tried, what Jesus is getting at is really in how if we are abiding in Christ, bearing fruit, being led by His Spirit, spending time in fellowship with God in prayer and in reading the Word of God, what we ask will end up being what IS the will of God. If it isn't in the will of God, we can ask but we aren't going to see it happen. We can ask for a mountain to be removed but God may have different plans for that mountain. Animals may forage on that mountain, people may be living on that mountain. Similarly, we may see a mountain in our way but God may have other plans other than just to remove that mountain. When Jesus said, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33), He could have said just the same, "seek first the will of God and His righteousness and then all these things will be added to you." Those things Jesus was referring to were basic necessities such as food and clothing. The will of God at the present is that He is still building His kingdom and working in us to be like

Christ. "In this manner, therefore, pray: **Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven...**" (**Matthew 6:9-10**)

Listen to what is said in **Revelation 12:11**, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death." While we shouldn't take that Scripture out of context in that it is part of the overcoming of the saints against Satan, the devil, it still applies to us in the here and now. It is in Christ alone that we are saved, by the shedding of His precious blood. "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." Just as Paul said, "it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me", we are being called into the will of God to be IN CHRIST, to let Christ reign in us. Then in faith we must believe what Paul says, "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you." (**Romans 8:11**) We are called by God to surrender our own selfish will and desires for God's will in building His kingdom and making us to be holy as He is holy.

The Last thing in our passage of Scripture is in Jesus saying that we must forgive others so that we can be forgiven. Nothing can get us out of fellowship with God and with other people more so than when we are harboring bitterness towards someone. Think of it this way. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (**Romans 5:8**) Christ died for you and me, despite all of our wretchedness and ungodliness. But God is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (**2 Peter 3:9**) Having a root of bitterness towards someone else may negatively affect that person but mostly that bitterness is going to affect the person who is harboring it. And really what that does is alienate us from fellowship with God and even God's people, and in moving forward in God's will for our lives and in bearing any kind of fruit for God's glory. As Paul said, "A little leaven leavens the whole lump." (**Galatians 5:9**) A little bitterness can spoil our witness, our testimony of Christ, as He is to be working in us the fruit of the Spirit, not bitterness.

You may say with some things that you can't do it. I can't forgive that person. Once again, there is only one who came in the flesh who was and is holy and that is Jesus. But we are meant to be "casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." (**1 Peter 5:7**) Many times I've had to take my problems to Jesus and just lay it at His feet. Believing on Jesus is believing that "it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (**Philippians 2:13**),

and that "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (**Ephesians 2:10**) No one wants us to succeed and to overcome in this world more than Jesus does. He's already proven His love for us, dying on a cross for our sins, which means He took each of our sins upon Himself, so that we can be a child of the Most High God, to where we we be joint-heirs with Jesus and we will reign with Him for all of eternity. We have to believe that Jesus got us started and He is going to get us to where He is leading us, "being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." (**Philippians 1:6**) But we are being shown in God's Word that it is God's will and plan and that we have to remain in fellowship with Him so we can share Christ with others where we can bear much fruit for His glory. He's doing the work in us, we just are recipients of His great mercy and grace. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." (**Ephesians 2:8-9**) Never are our works sufficient for any praise or blessings of God. It is in faith, believing on the Lord Jesus, from beginning to end, **to have faith in the will of God.** "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that **He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.**"

Heavenly Father,
I confess that I have sinned against You.
I ask that You forgive me of my sins.
I believe that Jesus died on the cross for my sins,
I confess with my mouth that Jesus is my Lord,
and I believe in my heart that You raised Jesus from the dead,
so that I can have forgiveness of sins,
and be reconciled to You, God, My Father.
I now commit to You, that I will repent of my sins,
and live in the newness of life,
being led by Your Holy Spirit,
all this I pray, in Christ Jesus, my Savior and Lord. Thank You Lord!