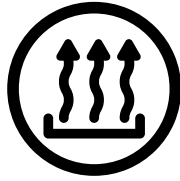




The Gospel of Mark



WARM-UP

If you were an animal, what animal would you be and why?

Read out loud as a group

Mark 10 recap: Chapter 10 is packed full. We see pharisee's attempting to trick Jesus with questions about divorce, reminders to have faith like a child, illusions to Jesus as the ultimate rich young ruler who gives all He has for us, disciples seeking places of power and influence, another prediction of Jesus's coming death, and a healing of a blind man. Now we pick up with Jesus as he walks towards his death.

Read out loud as a group

MARK 11:1-11 (NIV)

¹ 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.



What stands out to you?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary.

Read out loud as a group

“The royal associations of the donkey are behind Zechariah 9:9, a prophecy of Jerusalem’s king riding on an ass. Matthew 21:5 and John 12:15 cite this prophecy as having been fulfilled in Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. That Jesus rides not a war *horse but the donkey of Zechariah 9:9 makes him (like Moses, who also rode an ass [Ex 4:20]) “meek.” His chosen beast does not show him to be a poor or common man but a *king, albeit one who does not conquer... A man on a donkey is not looking for war. One is reminded of the Eastern iconographic tradition in which Christ rides his donkey sidesaddle - the traditional posture of a woman, not a *warrior.

Zechariah 9:9 is not the only OT text about donkeys connected with Jesus’ triumphal entry. Not only does the prophecy that the disciples will find a colt (Mk 11:2 and parallels) remind one of 1 Samuel 10:1-9 (Samuel’s prophecy of the finding of lost asses), but the seemingly superfluous mention that this colt will be “tied” probably alludes to Genesis 49:11 (“binding his foal to the vine and his ass’s colt to the choice vine [he washes his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes];” RSV). This line was given a messianic interpretation in Judaism (cf. Gen 49:10 LXX; rabbinic sources naturally associate Gen 49:11 and Zech 9:9). “

- The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery, pg 215 “Donkeys”



Jesus enters the temple, looks around, and then leaves quietly. Why do you think this pause was significant before his dramatic actions the next day?

Possible Answers: Jesus’ entrance was a fulfillment of prophecy and the emphasis was on his coming as a peaceful king not in judgement. The silence emphasizes his actions in the temple.



How do we see similar patterns today—welcoming Jesus enthusiastically, but only on our own terms?

Possible Answers: May vary.

Read out loud as a group

MARK 11:12-26 (NIV)

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 outer courts of the temple where they were selling goods was the only place where gentiles could come to worship and pray. Jesus emphasizes this by calling the temple a "house of prayer for all nations." while the religious leaders allowed it to become a market with inflated prices. How might this relate to Jesus' acted parable of the fig tree?

Possible Answers: The fig tree had the appearance of fruit while actually having nothing. The temple had the appearance of godliness while actually having nothing. The OT had the appearance of salvation but really the law didn't do the saving, Jesus does. Jesus didn't "cleanse" the old testament to make it new, He destroyed it, like the fig tree, and ushered in a new salvation. Fruit relates to inclusion or spreading, faithfulness, and forgiveness.



Where might we be relying on outward appearances, like the fig tree, rather than true dependence on God?

Possible Answers: May vary.

Read out loud as a group

“Might he [Jesus] not be telling us, by these two illustrations of the frankly disastrous consequences of prayer (the fig tree withered, Mt. Zion sunk), that even the self-willed calamities of our lives are not hopeless as long as we believe in the gracious One who forgives - and are willing to pass his forgiveness along to others? Might it not mean simply that the world, despite the catastrophes it has brought on itself by its stupid wish-lists, and despite the judgment that must necessarily be pronounced on such follies, is always - even at its willful worst - just one breath away from total reconciliation, if only it will forgive?”

- Kingdom, Grace, Judgement by Robert Farrar Capon, pg 439

Read out loud as a group

MARK 11:27-33 (NIV)

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.”



How does fear of people shape the religious leader’s decisions—and how does fear of people shape our decisions?

Possible Answers: The religious leaders feared going against the people because they worried they would lose their power, influence, reputation, and trust that the people placed in them. We fear people for many different reasons and this can affect how we live our lives, worship the Lord, share our faith, participate in relationships, etc.



Ultimately, this passage presents a question: will we submit to Jesus’ authority or evade it? What does genuine submission to his authority look like in everyday life?

Possible Answers: May vary.

DISCUSSION FOR ACCOUNTABILITY



- If Jesus were to “walk into the temple” of our lives today, what might he challenge, overturn, or cleanse?
- What “terms” have you added to Jesus?