

## A Big Disappointment

A man once said, “We use to frequent a restaurant because of a particular item they offered on their menu, until one day we went and they no longer offered it. Since the remainder of the menu was not anything so special, we simply never went back.” Ever had that kind of altering disappointment? Jesus did, and we learn a lesson from it in today’s Templates of Truth.

There are a few times that the actions of Jesus during His earthly ministry cause us to scratch our heads in confusion and wonder what exactly was going on. One such occasion was *when they departed from Bethany (and) He became hungry. And seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves...and He answered and said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again!”* (Mark 11:12-14). The next morning, Jesus and His disciples passed by the same fig tree and saw that it was *withered from the roots up* (Mark 11:20). Peter called attention to the tree and said, *“Rabbi, behold, the fig tree which You cursed has withered.”* (Mark 11:21).

We have to honestly ask, “What did Jesus have against that helpless little innocent fig tree?” In our analysis, we must remember that Jesus was the perfect, sinless man; and whatever the explanation, Jesus did nothing wrong. Mark helps us to understand that *it was not the season for figs* (Mark 11:13). Jesus surely would have known this, but that wasn’t the issue. The fig tree was *in leaf* (Mark 11:13). The time of this event was April, and fig trees did not bear fruit until June to November. The presence of leaves, however, indicated the presence of fruit, but none were there. Jesus was obviously using the fig tree as an object lesson for teaching some deeper, spiritual truth. So, what can we gain from it?

Jesus described our relationship to Him in these botanical terms: *I am the vine, you are the branches* (John 15:5). In this relationship, we are to *bear much fruit* (John 15:5,8). In this regard, we are just like the fig tree. Jesus saw a tree full of large, healthy leaves and expected to find figs on it. Christians can look the same way. We can have all the appearances of sound, spiritual health. We can attend church on Sunday. We can faithfully write our tithe check. We can live a good life and treat others with kindness and respect, but still be seriously lacking in the fruit department. What happens to such trees? Jesus said, *every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He (the Father) takes away* (John 15:1)...*he is thrown away as a branch and dries up* (John 15:6). Like the fig tree, we wither away under a curse!

Now, I realize that is harsh language and we must be careful that we don’t make erroneous theological conclusions. Being taken away and thrown away is not referring to a loss of salvation as some would insist. Jesus is simply helping us to understand that a fruitless Christian is a worthless Christian! He might as well be a dried, dead branch. His life is producing nothing of spiritual value and substance. God cannot use such a believer. Therefore, his life is void of the power and anointing necessary for spiritual strength and service. There is no spiritual joy, fulfillment, satisfaction or success in life. The emptiness is like living under a curse!

How do dead branches come back to life? How do fruitless trees teem once again with produce? Jesus stated it very plainly: *he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit* (John 15:5). It is really that simple! Jesus explained, *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me...for apart from Me you can do nothing* (John 15:4-5). Abiding involves far more than just spreading your leaves. Jesus further qualifies it: *if you abide in Me and My words abide in you* (John 15:7). We are once again reminded of the essential element of the Word of God. It is the believer's plant food, fertilizing the soil and sending nutrients into the branches and leaves. It is what causes the twigs to burst forth into fruit, and for the fruit to grow, ripen and be filled with sweetness and substance. If you trying to exist without a daily investment of intimate time with God in His Word, you are living under a false pretense and a self-induced curse. Your spiritual vitality is withering away, even though you may have all the looks of healthy, vibrant leaves. When Jesus looks your way, will He find ripe fruit in which to satisfy His need and usefulness for you, or will He be disappointed to see just a bunch of leaves?

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide in Christ. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in the Lord Jesus.

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