

April 2, 2023
La Jolla Christian Fellowship
Palm Sunday: Of Donkeys, Figs and Mountains – Mark 11's Message for Us
Guest Speaker – Elliott Stearns

I. Mark 11's Structure

- A. Day 1: Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem riding on a colt and visiting the Temple
- B. Day 2: The "Cursing" the Fig Tree and the Cleansing of the Temple
- C. Day 3: The Fig Tree Withered; Peter and Jesus' Dialog concerning faith
- D. Day 4: Jesus' Authority Challenged by the Religious Authorities

II. Reading Mark 11 raises a variety of questions...

- A. What is the symbolism of the colt tied to a door near "**where two ways meet**"? (vss 2-6)
- B. Why the drama and dialog concerning the loosing of the colt?
- C. Why were the disciples' garments put on colt and Jesus sitting on them? (vs 7)
- D. What was Jesus's reaction or response to the crowds? (vss 9-10)
- E. Why did Jesus curse a "poor innocent" fig tree simply because it didn't have the fruit he desired to satisfy his hunger? ...especially considering "**the time of figs was not yet.**" (vss 12-14)
- F. Why the transition from humbly riding on the colt to becoming violent with emotion in the temple against the moneychangers? (vss 15-16)
- G. After Peter questioned Jesus about the withering of the fig tree, what was the meaning of Jesus' statement, "**Have faith in God?**" ...and why does the statement literally and cryptically read, "**Have the faith OF God?**" (vss 20-22) – whatever does THAT mean? **"Have**
- H. What is the relationship between the fig tree's withering, Jesus' answer to Peter, and prayer?...and what is the "**this mountain**" that faith can cast into the sea? (vss 22-23)
- I. Why the stress on forgiveness of others when praying?

Questions for Discussion

1. If a passage in Scripture seems confusing or needs clarification, why is running to a commentary or a "local commentator" (read: Bible teacher) **NOT** the best way to BEGIN to obtain an understanding of the text?
2. Michelangelo was quoted regarding seeing the angel in the marble. Another quote of his is: "*Genius is eternal patience.*" Considering Jesus' dialog with Peter regarding the fig tree's withered estate and the Jews' ultimate restoration, and His promise to those who have "**kept the word of MY patience**" (Rev 3:10; cf. the Emperor Augustus's personal motto: *Festina Lente*, "Hasten Slowly"), describe or discuss the role of an active and dynamic HOPE in the Christian's walk with the Lord.
3. A lot of Christians, as one has written, "*believe in God and hope to go to heaven when they die, but they live lives that are largely indistinguishable from everyone else. Secularism is, after all, the default way of thinking about life and the world in our culture: It is the water we swim in, the air we all breathe.*" How can we not only NOT accommodate ourselves and our thinking to the world, but aggressively CONFRONT IT by the Holy Spirit? How did the early church turn the world "upside down" (Acts 17:6)?