

Call to Obedience #398
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
www.schultze.org

Jesus is Hungry

By Reimar Schultze

The day after Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem we read this: *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. And 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..."* (Mark 11:12-14 NKJV).

This is one of the most remarkable stories in the Bible: Jesus cursing, condemning and killing a fig tree. It is a story that stands in isolation of any other story ever told. We understand that God slays the wicked: *...God is angry with the wicked every day* (Psalm 7:11 NKJV). For example, in Moses' time, we see God's anger poured out on His disobedient children. Some were killed by fire, some by the earth opening up and some by pestilence. But they were moral beings. They had a conscience to know right from wrong. That means they could be held accountable. But a fig tree is totally void of any moral aptitude, therefore what makes it the object of the wrath of God?

These kind of thoughts come to us very quickly until we realize that **when Jesus cursed the fig tree, condemning it, He put His judgment on all who do not bear fruit to satisfy His hunger!** Now, let us have a closer look at this fig tree that was *by the road* (Matthew 21:19 NKJV). In the Greek, it says He saw "*one* fig tree." That means Jesus really noticed just this one tree because it had leaves on it, which meant it should have fruit. (Fig trees have fruit first, before leaves.) All the other fig trees that Jesus saw on His way to Jerusalem that morning were just budding, without fruit or leaves yet. So Jesus expected fruit on the early tree, but it was a hypocrite fig tree.

This tree was a show of performance without substance. Jesus' physical hunger here for figs represents His spiritual hunger for fruit under our leaves, under our religious profession. By fruit I mean that which is on the King's menu. In this story, Jesus first addresses Israel. Israel was not lacking in religious profession and in rituals, but she was lacking in the fruits of

repentance. Then, obviously Jesus is also addressing the church that came out of Israel which means all of us. He expects us to feed Him. Levi made Jesus a great feast, so did Zachaeus and so did Lazarus. Jesus feasted of these men. Make Jesus a feast every day and you will be blessed beyond measure. **When we feed of Jesus and He feeds of us, we have Holy Spirit fellowship.**

Now, let us look at two other events in the book of Mark: the one immediately preceding and the one immediately following this story of the fig tree. Both of these events teach us that Jesus is looking for more in our lives than leaves. We learn here what He was looking for.

Jesus' Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem

The day before Jesus cursed the fig tree, we have Jesus' triumphant entrance into Jerusalem. Again, it was nothing but leaves. *And many spread their garments on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"* (Mark 11:8-9 NKJV).

As you can see, with the leaves and the branches came the excitement, the shouts, the irrational exuberance, the false expectations and false perceptions as to who Jesus was. What Jesus was hungry for, from His followers, was altogether something other.

My friend, is our religion today like that of many of those Jews on that first Palm Sunday? They worshiped and praised a Jesus who did not exist, but was only a figment of their imagination, who was nothing but an invention of their defiled intellects. Yet, this is the Jesus they wanted; this is the Jesus they admired: a deliverer from the bondage of Rome and all their troubles. They wanted someone to make their lives more comfortable – a dispenser of crowns rather than crosses, of a *feel-good lifestyle* rather than one requiring each man to crucify his self-seeking nature to bring him into harmony with his Maker. What kind of Jesus have you created in your mind? Do you have the real Jesus?

Yes, there was no lack of worship with these people. Loud praises and love for the Word was not absent. They had the leaves, but they lacked the fruit. On Palm Sunday, they praised Him; they were fanatical about Him, but five days later they cried: "Crucify Him." He did not turn out to be what they wanted Him

to be. They did not like the real Jesus. They rejected Him. If you have the real Jesus, you will both be rejected and most blessed.

Jesus' Cleansing of the Temple

Let us now look at Mark's account of the event following the cursing of the fig tree: *So they came to Jerusalem. And 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' "* (Mark 11:15-17 NKJV).

It took 47 years to build this temple. It was considered a piece of art and an architectural wonder rivaling anything Rome had to offer. But there were two problems with it. Jesus did not feel at home in this building because it was not used for what it was designed for from the very beginning: prayer. *Also the sons of the foreigner Who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, And to love the name of the LORD, ...Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer...For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations* (Isaiah 56:6-7 NKJV).

Do you see that the temple activity was also nothing but leaves? It was not satisfying fruit for which Jesus was hungry and Jesus is still looking for satisfying fruit in all of our churches today: man communing with God; man interceding; and man surrendering himself entirely to his Maker. Leaves without fruit makes Jesus angry. My friend, is Jesus angry at what we are doing in many of our temples of worship today? In fact, Jesus' anger at this temple activity was so great that it was the only thing that ever stirred Him to physical violence (here and in John 2:15 NKJV). It seems to me that Jesus is more grieved over prayerlessness in our hearts and churches than anything else because **if we are prayerless, we cannot live holy lives; we cannot abide in Christ; and we cannot do the works of God.** We are nothing but leaves to be cast into the fire to be burned (John 15:6 NKJV).

Jesus expects fruit from us. He wants His children to feed Him. As a bridegroom feeds his bride, so the bride must feed her bridegroom. But you say: "How can I feed Him?" You feed Him by holy living. You feed Him by interceding with Him, by praising Him, by witnessing, by caring for the widows and the orphans, and by visiting the sick and those who are in prison.

Husbands, you feed Jesus by loving your wife; and wives, you feed Him by honoring and respecting your husband. You feed Jesus by keeping the Sabbath holy, by loving your enemies, by comforting the discouraged, by giving generously and cheerfully, by going the second mile, by loving your enemies, by keeping yourself pure and unspotted from the world, by meeting with Him often, and by showing forth the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that He was hungry. Nobody, nothing in nature can feed Him, but His disciples. Solomon delighted in the way of the eagle in the air, in the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and in the way of a man with a maid – but not so with God. The psalmist tells us that in the saints, the fruit bearers, are **all** His delights (Psalm 16:3 NKJV). We, the holy ones, are His only delights because we are the only ones that feed Him.

Jesus is exceedingly displeased and disappointed with lukewarm and fruitless souls. On that great Judgment Day, He will spit them out of His mouth in great disgust because they did not feed Him (Revelation 3:15-16 NKJV).

Finally, what is prayer? There are many good definitions. Let me give you some: prayer is life, prayer is communion with God, prayer is intercession, prayer is praise, prayer is waiting upon God – but above all, **prayer is getting God to do things He otherwise would not do.** James' words, *...you do not have because you do not ask* (James 4:2 NKJV), are a clear indication that God does nothing but by prayer. Unless somebody had prayed for you, you would not be saved. You have an obligation to pray for the salvation of others.

So, my friend, be sure that you have fruit under your leaves lest you miss the great marriage feast of the Lamb.

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