

# The Gospel According to Mark - Faith for Life

June 23, 2019  
Faith For Life  
Mark 11:20-25

## Community Group Discussion Guide

### Read the Text

Mark 11:20 In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots.

Mark 11:21 Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!"

Mark 11:22 "Have faith in God," Jesus answered.

Mark 11:23 "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.

Mark 11:24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

Mark 11:25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

### Sermon Summary

The disciples are amazed at the withered fig tree and Peter specifically points it out. Jesus responds by saying "Have faith in God!" Jesus then makes some statements about faith and ends by mentioning this issue of forgiveness. In order to fully understand this passage we have to consider the context of the passage, both in the Gospel of Mark and in the Bible as a whole. This message discusses the necessity of faith for life, the Biblical narrative that guides faith for life, and a particular negative that hampers faith for life. What it means and what it does not mean to pray in faith is discussed in considerable detail.

### Questions to Ponder

1. What are some things we can learn about God from this story? (God know our needs and wants to meet those needs, Jeremiah 29:11-14, Philippians 4:19/ God's timing is always right! Psa 37:7, 1 Pet 5:6/God will not answer prayers that violate His principles or His will for your life. James 4:3, Matt 6:9)
2. What can we learn about humankind, as well as ourselves, from this story? (We need mountain moving faith to overcome the spiritual, emotional, and circumstantial issues in life! Romans 8:37-39/We have to truly believe by faith God desires to meet our needs! Eph 3:12-21/ If we harbor unforgiveness or bitterness in our hearts it will negatively affect our relationship with God. 1 John 4:19-5:4)
3. What is God saying to you specifically through this passage as it pertains to your life, marriage, family, and work?
4. In light of what you've learned through this message and the subsequent discussion, what actions or attitudes do you need to adjust or enact to be obedient to God?

### Full Sermon Notes

"Cause when You speak, When You move

When You do what only You can do,  
It changes us, it changes what we see and what we seek"

I pray today that The Holy Spirit of God will speak and move and do what only He can do! I pray today He will change what we see and what we seek! We're going to talk about faith for life today, what true faith is and how we can exercise that faith in a God-honoring way, and in a way that will truly change our lives! Let's pray and then we will read our passage for today. Pray. Mark 11:20-25...

Mark 11:20 In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots.

Mark 11:21 Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!"

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be yours.

Mark 11:25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

## Looking At The Context

How many times do you ever read in the New Testament about the disciples casting mountains into the sea? You don't. The mountains Jesus was speaking of were not the physical mountains of the world but the mountains we face in life. Jesus is preparing the disciples for the hardships they are about to face in life. The Disciples will be scattered and eventually some of them will face persecution and even death for the sake of Christ. Jesus tells Peter...

Mark 11:22 "Have faith in God."

### 1. The Necessity of Faith for Life

Why does Jesus say this to Peter? Strong faith was going to be an absolute necessity for his spiritual survival! Peter would face the faith testing struggle of overcoming a terrible failure in the very near future. He would deny Jesus three times and it would take mountain moving faith to get beyond this event. Peter had been so sure of himself and was one of the most outspoken disciples. In a few chapters we will read these words...

Mark 14:29 Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not."

Mark 13:30 "Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times."

Mark 14:31 But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the others said the same.

And then Peter denies knowing Jesus, not once, but three times! Can you imagine the faith it was going to take to get Peter beyond this mess up?

Maybe you're here today and you're struggling with past mess ups and failures. Satan constantly holds those things over your head! Listen to these words from Dr. David Seamands...

"Some of the most powerful weapons in Satan's arsenal are psychological. Fear is one of these. Doubt is another. Anger, hostility, worry, and of course, guilt. Long-standing guilt is hard to shake off; it seems to hang on even after a Christian claims forgiveness and accepts pardoning grace."

Do you know what guilt leads to? It leads to one of the most potent satanic tools used against us. Dr. Seamands says it has "the effectiveness of a deadly missile!" What is it?

"Low self-esteem...a gut-level feeling of inferiority, inadequacy, and low self-worth."

Now let me share something with you. A lot of people get things mixed up here. They think that in order to accept God's grace and mercy they have to go beyond admitting they have made mistakes and are sinners in need of a Savior. They have been led to believe they must see themselves as worthless, good for nothing, trash to be thrown out, and worthy of no one's love. While you will never deserve God's love or be good enough to earn it, you are not worthless! Why would God send His One and Only Son Jesus Christ to die on a Cross for people who were worth nothing? You are worth more to God than you could ever even begin to imagine. So when Satan tries to tell you you're worth zero, remember, the price Jesus paid to purchase your salvation, the price He paid to redeem and ransom you! When you begin to understand your worth to God, Satan's psychological weapons will lose their potency and power! What once seemed like a mountain of mental and emotional turmoil will be cast into the sea and you will begin to experience a new kind of joy and freedom!

Did Peter get beyond his failures? Absolutely!! Jesus gave him the opportunity to confess his failures and then let him know he still had a divine calling on his life! The loving way Jesus allowed Peter to reckon with his past failures let Peter know he was indeed loved and forgiven! Peter discovered faith for life and went on to be the preacher at Pentecost where thousands were saved and became the leader of the New Testament Church!

The book of Acts tells us that the disciples would be threatened by those in power, imprisoned, and beaten. It would take mountain moving faith to overcome these kind of difficulties and see the gospel spread to the

known world. But they found faith for life and God used them in powerful ways in spite of terrible circumstances.

John was exiled to the island of Patmos and through mountain moving faith overcame his imprisonment, received great revelations from God and wrote the book of Revelation. John wasn't dealing with guilt over past mistakes, he was dealing with unfair and unjust punishment from ungodly men!

Maybe you're here today and you've been walking with the Lord for years, reading your Bible, praying, attending small groups and even sharing your faith with others and now life's circumstances have hit you so hard and you wonder where is God and how could this be fair when, even though your not perfect, you've tried to live right! Now you've been betrayed in a relationship, or you've been hit with an unexpected health disaster that has turned your world upside down. Or maybe it's a loved one who is going through a health crisis, or maybe you've experienced the loss of a loved one and you are facing the pain of grief. Sometimes life is so unjust and unfair. But let me remind you that Jesus not only died so He could cover the penalty of our sin, He also died on the Cross so He could defeat death and the grave and injustice, and disease and the power of evil!

Jesus used the withered fig tree and the illustration of a mountain cast into the sea to show that through faith in God's love, His promises, and His provision, we don't have to wither up spiritually, but we can overcome any mountain of circumstances that stands in our way! By faith we understand that anything truly needed for spiritual survival will be granted by God! God can cast the mountains into the sea or He can give us divine strength to climb the mountains. Now we must remember, like I said last week, sometimes, certainly not always, but sometimes, our circumstances are linked to consequences of decisions we've made. That's not God's punishment, it's consequences, and God has promised to help us get through those as well! When Satan can't use low self-esteem to get to us, he'll try to get discouragement and depression to tackle us, because of our situation in life. But God offers us faith for life! Faith that helps us to know that...

Rom 8:37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Rom 8:38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,

Rom 8:39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## **2. The Narrative that Guides Faith for Life**

Mark 11:23 "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.

Mark 11:24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

In order to rightfully handle Scripture, it must be taken in context. Not only the immediate context, but the larger context and the context of the Bible as a whole! Jesus had no doubt taught the disciples many other things about prayer and faith and we see this in the four gospels. We also see teaching about faith in the Old Testament and we see teaching about faith from Paul the Apostle and other writers in the New Testament! We must take all of this into account to find the full narrative of faith for life. Sometimes people want to pull Jesus' words out of context and say that if you believe hard enough and have faith that's big enough then you can use God like a Genie in the bottle and let your imagination run wild! But the fuller Biblical narrative of faith found in the Bible prevents this perversion of true faith for life. For example James says this...

James 4:3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

God's not going to answer prayers that are in direct contradiction to His divine principles or His divine will for your life! In fact, Jesus had already taught the disciples about prayer with the model prayer in which He said we should pray like this...

Mat 6:9 "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

Mat 6:10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Mat 6:11 Give us today our daily bread.

Mat 6:12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Mat 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

Now I know the Pope has made headlines recently about that last verse. Jesus was not insinuating God would ever tempt us. He would never do that as it would go against His very nature and Scripture tells us emphatically God tempts no man with sin! But we sometimes find ourselves in places of temptation and we should ask God to deliver us from the evil one! When we say lead us not into temptation, that is really an honest and humble admission that we are vulnerable and need God's power to overcome evil! The Pope, along with some of experts and Biblical language scholars have concluded it might be better translated: "Abandon us not when in temptation." Let me just say this: God will not abandon anyone who genuinely seeks His power to overcome temptation.

Back to the Biblical narrative on faith for life and praying in faith. Did you notice Jesus taught in the model prayer that we are to seek God's will on earth as it is in heaven and that we should ask for things like daily bread and for forgiveness when we've done wrong? And right after His teaching on the model prayer, or Lord's prayer, Jesus tells the disciples this...

Luke 11:9 "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

Luke 11:10 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

Luke 11:11 "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead?

Luke 11:12 Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?

Luke 11:13 If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

#### What does it mean to pray in Faith?

It is not...

Saying magic words that will make whatever you want come to pass

It is not praying to escape all hardship and difficulty

It is not manipulating God to further your agenda

It is not the instant road to financial success

It is not the instant road to perfect personal health

It is not a magic formula that allows you to continue to live in sin and just confess you did it so you can keep doing it

#### What does it mean to pray in Faith?

It is:

Trusting God to forgive you for your mess ups and to give you strength to do better

Trusting God to give the strength for whatever hardships and difficulties you face

Trusting God to set the agenda for your life with purpose and meaning

Trusting God to meet your needs, not necessarily your wants

Trusting God to give you the health you need to accomplish His purpose in your life.

Seeking God's desire and will for your life

What does it mean to pray in faith? Paul the Apostle explained it so beautifully in his heartfelt letter to the church in Ephesus. Listen...

Eph 3:12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

Eph 3:13 I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

Eph 3:14 For this reason I kneel before the Father,

Eph 3:15 from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

Eph 3:16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

Eph 3:17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,

Eph 3:18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,

Eph 3:19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Eph 3:20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,

Eph 3:21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

What does it mean to pray in Faith?

It means you know that God knows your needs

Mat 6:7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

Mat 6:8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

In other words: Don't think God doesn't know your deepest needs! He does! In prayer, you're acknowledging that He already knows your needs!

What does it mean to pray in Faith?

It means you know that God can meet your needs

Psa 77:11 I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.

Psa 77:12 I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds.

Psa 77:13 Your ways, O God, are holy. What god is so great as our God?

Psa 77:14 You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples.

Psa 77:15 With your mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph. Selah

In other words: He's done it before and He can do it again!

What does it mean to pray in Faith?

It means you know that God wants to meet your needs

Jer 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Jer 29:12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.

Jer 29:13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Jer 29:14 I will be found by you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back from captivity.

What does it mean to pray in Faith?

It means you know that God will meet those needs

Phil 4:19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

An Important Spiritual Truth

Psa 37:3 Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.

Psa 37:4 Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Psa 37:5 Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this:

Psa 37:6 He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.

This verse can be translated two different ways in the Hebrew language. Subject-verb agreement is different in the Hebrew language, so this could be translated either...

Psa 37:4 Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.

or

Psa 37:4 "Delight yourself in the LORD and He will give your heart its desires!"

When your hearts desires are put there by God Himself you know that He will give you the desires of your heart. So if you have made God a priority in your life and He is your greatest delight and as a result He puts the right desires in your heart, then it stands to reason He will give you the desires of your heart! He put them there!

**What does it mean to pray in Faith?**

**It means you trust God's timing will always be right**

Psa 37:7 Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him . . .

1 Pet 5:6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

### **What Mountains Need To Be Moved By Faith In Your Life?**

The mountain of fear?  
The mountain of worry?  
The mountain of discouragement?  
The mountain of no self-confidence?  
The mountain of uncontrolled debt?  
The mountain of enslaving sin?  
The mountain of \_\_\_\_\_?

### **3. A Negative that Hampers Faith for Life**

Mark 11:25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

It almost seems this verse is just tacked on and at first glance you might wonder what this has to do with faith for life. I mean, your talking about you and your faith in God. It seems a passage about faith for life would just be about your relationship with God. But we have to understand this: Your relationship with God effects all of your other relationships and your relationships with others effects your relationship with God! Even the Model Prayer said something about this! Remember?

Mat 6:12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

There are people in this room today and there is a mountain of unforgiveness and bitterness that needs to be cast into the sea!

And remember the context thing I mentioned? James speaks to this issue...

1 John 4:19 We love because he first loved us.

1 John 4:20 If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.

1 John 4:21 And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

1 John 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.

1 John 5:2 This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands.

1 John 5:3 This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,

1 John 5:4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

But someone may say, "How can I forgive after all of the hurt this person as caused in my life? Remember this: Forgiveness is not saying that someone hasn't wronged you, or saying that it's okay that someone has hurt you, or continuing to allow someone to hurt you. Forgiveness is understanding how much wrong God forgave in your life. God didn't say it was okay that you sinned. He said I love you in spite of your sins. He didn't say just keep on living in your sin, but to confess your sins and to turn from those evil ways! Forgiveness is deciding not to treat others as they've treated you, but to treat others as you have been treated by God! Forgiveness is deciding to love the person even if you can't love their actions, and attitudes. Forgiveness is about having the faith to trust God to deal with the person's hardened heart and to give you wisdom in the way you deal with the offending party. You may not be able to rebuild a relationship with someone if they are not willing repent of their sins and allow God to change their hearts and minds, but you never stop praying for them. It's about having faith that God has forgiven you, even though you didn't deserve it, but you were worth it, remembering God told us to to be sorry for our sin and to repent of our sins and start living a new life.

Rom 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Rom 5:2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Rom 5:3 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;

Rom 5:4 perseverance, character; and character, hope.

Rom 5:5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Let's pray!