# Have Faith In God

Mark 11:12-25 (Key verse 22)

““Have faith in God,” Jesus answered.”

Year in year out, we feel the world is too much. We have financial issues, registration issues, family issues, illness issues, the list goes on. Each year Universities are bombarded with student strikes and this just goes to show the challenges faced by students who simply desire to make a life through education. We find ourselves living as though we are life punching bag. After we overcome one thing another thing comes up. After we graduate from University you may think life will now run smooth. The bible teaches that the righteous shall live by faith. At the beginning of last year, our key verse for the ministry was based on Mark 11:22, “Have faith in God.” Though we know that as believers the only way to live a life that pleases God is by faith. And we wanted to remind ourselves daily that faith is the only victory through this world. In today’s passage I want us to look at this passage through the lens of prayer. Because we are now drawing this passage from verse 12 instead of 20 as was the case for our 2024 key passage. It seems at the heart of a life of faith is a right relationship with God and an effective life of prayer. How then can we practically live by faith. What is this faith? What is a right relationship with God? Why is prayer essential? Part I of this message is about God’s house and Part II is about an effective prayer life due to faith. It is my prayer that we may overcome the world and live lives that are pleasing before God. Amen!

**Part I: My House Will Be Called House of Prayer for All Nations**

Look at verse 12-13, The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. 13Seeing 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.” Jesus is hungry an din a distance sees a fig tree in leaf. In those days it was general knowledge that, the fig would first produce fruit before their strong leaves. Now the fact that this fig tree already had leaves would indicate that it actually had fruits ready to be eaten. However when Jesus reaches this fig tree he finds nothing. In fact the season was only not right, it was not the season for figs as verse 13b says. However, the fig had leaves and leaves means you should also have fruits ready for eating.

How does Jesus respond to this fig tree, look at verse 14, “Then he said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard him say it.” All along Jesus miraculous powers had been used to build or construct. Healings, walking on water, removal of demons from people and all. It is the first time in the whole Bible that Jesus declares a destructive work, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” In Matthew 21, it reads, “Then he said to it, “May you never bear fruit again!”” This was a complete destruction of this fig tree. Was this because Jesus was hungry and he was reacting emotionally on the poor fig tree? Not at all, this was actually more like a parable of what the disciples should expect in Jerusalem. The fig tree was cursed or destroyed because it had an appearance of having fruit but had non. Outwardly you could see the leaves however, when you came closer it did not have what it was showing to have.

There is a similar parable of Israel, a fruitless fig tree in Luke 13:7b-9, “…‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’ Well a little more time has passed and there’s been no change and there’s been no repentance and there’s been no turning to Him and so the parable of Mark 11 picks up where the parable of Luke 13 ends. The temple is at last and finally a fruitless pretence of worship. That means that Judaism is spiritually bankrupt. The whole system and the nation and the system it relies on is cursed by God. Let us see why this is so.

In verse 15-16, when Jesus reached Jerusalem and entered the temple courts, he began to drive out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned tables and will not allow anyone to carry out merchandise. Look at verse 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.’” The direct application of the curse is to the temple, but it expands to the temple leadership and the temple participants and thus to the nation and becomes very personal. Paul says they had a zeal for God but not according to knowledge. They made a fatal flaw. They didn’t worship idols. Worship of idols is what caused the destruction of the previous temple. The destruction of this temple is not about idols, it’s about thinking you can establish your own righteousness.

All along Jesus has been trying to call them to faith, obedience, repentance to listen to true worship. His whole ministry and all that concerns Christ and all that concerns of God, is focused on one issue and that issue is worship, worship. The Father seeks, John 4 says, true worshipers to worship Him in spirit and in truth. The Son of Man came to seek for the Father those true worshipers. The church is made up of those who worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ, and give no confidence to the flesh, Philippians 3. We are true worshipers. This is a very important and crucial for a healthy ministry.

And of course Jesus saw every disturbing reality in this world. He saw every successful criminal campaign among the tax collectors, who were basically stealing money from the people. He saw that inequity. He saw the abuse of the poor who were deemed in the theological system to be under the curse of God and therefore to be left that way. He saw the terrible plight of the sick. And I’m sure there were many things that called for social reform and many things that called for political action. They needed reformers to take care of those things. They needed soldiers to protect people from criminal conduct. But Jesus never addressed any of that, none of it. He didn’t talk about societal reformation, didn’t talk about political changes. He didn’t talk about changing the situation for poor people and for ill people, sick people. Was He disturbed by it? Of course He was, everything that wasn’t righteous disturbed Jesus. But He never deviated from a true and dominating issue that occupied His entire life and that was worship. A man’s relationship to God was the issue with Him and nothing else ultimately could ever be corrected until that was corrected. Worship was always the issue. And so, He went to the temple at the beginning. He went to the temple at the end. And He confronted the corruption of Israel’s religion all three years in between.

When the temple is corrupt, it’s because the leaders are corrupt. When the leaders are corrupt, the people are corrupt. When the people are corrupt, the nation is corrupt. If it’s bad in the temple, it’s bad everywhere. Somewhere I read, “…the measure of any society is its worship”. You cannot judge a people by their economic status. You cannot judge a nation by its economics. That’s superficial. You judge a nation by its worship. That’s how God judges. And it’s worship that determines eternal destiny. The Lord always goes to the temple, to the heart of worship. That is why Peter said, “Judgment must begin at the house of God.” True worship is possible, not at the building/structure temple, but only at the cross, only through the cross. There is no other place to go. The bible tells us we, are the temple of the Holy Spirit. May we become temples of prayer, may we become houses of prayer. The other wonderful thing is that, it is for all nations, not for certain people but is for everyone. May we repent of all sin through the cross of Jesus, be true worshipers and live a life of prayer. Amen!

**Part II: Effective Prayer life (How do we draw down divine power?)**

Look at verse 20-21, “In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. 21Peter remembered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!” Peter noticed something powerful had happened. Just as Jesus power was demonstrated through stopping all merchandise from happening in the temple. What was Jesus response, lets all read verse 22, “Have faith in God,” Jesus answered.” In other words, such power displays, either constructive or destructive, come from God. The rest of the passage is Jesus explanation of how then does one begin to draw down divine power. The disciples are going to need to know this because Jesus will no longer be with them physically. How are they going to draw on divine power like that when He’s not around?

There are four elements, four necessities for powerful prayer, effective prayer. **First, for a powerful effective prayer we need to have a sense of history**. Lets look at the fig tree incident once again. Peter says, “The fig tree which You cursed has withered.” He is saying, “I have seen the display of Your power.” The historical element here is to remember, being reminded or remembering. Peter said, “the Fig tree You cursed has withered.” Peter remembered that Jesu cursed the fig tree, and so e is at awe that indeed it has withered as Jesus had cursed it. If you go into the book of Deuteronomy you will notice that many times the word, you shall remember is repeated 15 times. Which means that though they may face many good and bad things, they should always remember God’s power. So we too should never forget our experiences of God’s power in our lives. Times when our prayers were answered. We need this remembrance to extract within us an powerful effective prayer.

**Secondly, for a powerful effective prayer, we need to be sound with the word of God. We need the right theology not some man made truths.** Our prayer need to be in line with the word of God. In verse 22, Jesus answered and said, “have faith in God.” The point here is about God. And what it means is in reference to prayer, “Trust God.” Have faith in God. In Matthew 21 a parallel passage says, “Have faith in God and don’t doubt.” It’s not the nature of faith here that is the issue, it’s the character of God that is the issue.

Look at verse 23-24 “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. 24Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, **believe that you have received it**, and it will be yours.” The word “Truly,” let us know that in spite of the fact that this seems too much, too outrageous, over the top, too much to give, too much to offer, too big, it’s true. This is exactly what God means, “Truly.” And it’s Jesus saying it personally, “I say to you, ‘if anyone.’” “If anyone says to this mountain.” The mountain is big obstacle impossible to move.

When Jesus taught the disciple how to pray, Jesus said, “Pray this way: ‘Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come**. Your will be done**.” That’s how you pray. “God, whatever honours your name, advances your kingdom, and accomplishes your will, that’s what I pray.” That’s how we should pray.

And of course the other way to pray is to pray to consume our own lusts, our own desires, to demand things from God. Turning God into a vending machine. But James says, “You ask and you don’t receive because you ask to consume it on your own desires.” All prayer should starts with your honour, your kingdom, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. That’s what it means to trust God. When Jesus says, “Have faith in God,” He’s saying, “Trust the Lord. Trust the Lord.” Whatever we ask along it in line with the will of God, will be done for you.

In 1 Peter 4:19 reads, “Those who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator.” Trust God; trust your life to Him; trust your circumstances to Him. The believer who prays with a great sense of history and understands the power of God, the believer who prays with a great sense of trust and understands that the best of all things is the will of God, draws from heaven’s power.

**Thirdly,** **for a powerful effective prayer, is to ask.** Look at verse 24, **“**24Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.**”** This should be obvious: “Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask.” James says, “You have not because you ask not.” Ask. “Believe that you have received them,” speaks of something in the future as if it’s already happened. “Believe that you have received them, these all things for which you ask, and they will be granted you.” James 4:3 says, “You ask and you don’t receive, because you ask to consume it on your own desires.” The Bible is clear on the qualifications: whatever is according to His will, whatever is according to His will. The beautiful model for that, Mark 14:36, our Lord in the garden, sweating, as it were, great drops of blood in anticipation of His own crucifixion, cries out, “Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me, this cup of coming suffering, sin-bearing; yet not what I will, but what You will.”

The Lord understands our cries. He understands the cry for healing. He understands the cry to marry and be married, for a better marriage. He understands the cry of the heart over the children that grieve you and just torture us with disaffection and their rebellion. He understands the struggles with money and finances. And He holds you in His heart, and He will never forsake us, and He will never withhold any good thing from you; and all things will work together for your good if you faithfully ask.

**Fourthly, moral qualifier.** Look at verse 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.” If we truly claim to be saved through the cross of Jesus. Who laid down his life for us while we were sinners. How come we do not have the grace to also forgive others. Indeed forgiveness is not easy. However, to maintain the right relationship with God, for our prayers to reach heaven. We need to let go of holding things against others and forgive them. This is how we can live a healthy and effective Christian life. This is not about our salvation, that what Jesus has already done through the cross. However, to live an effective Christian life, our prayer are only effective when we but forgive wrongs of others done against us.

**To conclude**, Acts 1. Verse 12 after the assertion of Jesus: “They were out on the Mount of Olives when He left. They went right back into Jerusalem. They entered the city and they to the upper room: Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas the son of James. These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to “prayer.” He was gone, and within hours of His leaving, they began to tap divine resources. “With them were the women, Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers, who had come to faith.” There were a hundred and twenty of them there praying.

Then they went from there to the great moment on the day of Pentecost, and three thousand were saved. And then another time five thousand were saved. And there were twenty thousand plus soon that believed the gospel; and the gospel literally went out so powerfully. And the Lord was saying to them by that answered prayer, “I told you that the power for the purposes of God would be available if you sought Me by prayer.” One word, Have faith in God! Amen!