

Overturing Status Quo - Mark 11:11-19

1. Praying Away the Grasshoppers

John Maxwell, Partners in Prayer

In the summer of 1876, grasshoppers nearly destroyed the crops in Minnesota. So in the spring of 1877, farmers were worried that the dreadful plague would again visit them and destroy the rich wheat crop, ruining thousands of people.

The situation was so severe that **Governor John S. Pillsbury** proclaimed April 26 a day of prayer and fasting. He urged every man, woman, and child to ask God to prevent the terrible scourge. All schools, shops, stores, and offices closed that day. There was a reverent quiet over all the state.

The next day dawned bright and clear. The temperature unexpectedly soared to midsummer levels. Minnesotans were devastated as they discovered billions of grasshopper larvae wiggling to life. The unusual heat persisted for three days, and it appeared that it would not be long before they started feeding and destroying the wheat crop.

The temperature suddenly dropped on the fourth day, and frost covered the entire state that night. The cold killed every pest as if poison or fire had been used. It went down in the history of Minnesota as the day God answered the people's prayers.

That is a remarkable story! God answers our prayers in unexpected ways.

2. In the Bible, God worked unexpectedly through unexpected people
 - a. Freed His nation through Moses, the fearful fugitive
 - b. Gideon, the farmer
 - c. Jesus and His apostles, “**unlearned men**” who “**turned the world upside down**”
3. In American History, God worked unexpectedly through unexpected people
 - a. **Declaration Signers** who began with a “***firm reliance on Providence***” and risked their “***lives, fortunes, and sacred honor***” for our liberty.
 - b. They put together a ragtag army that defeated the greatest army in their world
 - c. Attributed success to prayer and providence, not themselves
4. Jesus Gives us an Unexpected Picture **Mark 11.11-14 and 15-19 (mention, do not read yet)**
 - a. Cleansing the temple is in all four gospels: **Matthew 21; Mark 11; Luke 19; John 2**
 - b. Normal picture of Christ – weak, effeminate, and inoffensive; He is more
 - c. He came to uphold God's standards and save the lost – **John 3:17**
 - d. Jews want a conqueror – John's Question: *Are you the Haba?*
 - e. Jesus first came to save and will come again to conquer and judge.
 - 1) His whole life was rattling cages of the status quo.
 - 2) He was controversial [**Compared to “Just preach Jesus” today. Which Jesus?**]
5. I have realized that Jesus is about shaking us out of our status quo to lead us to a deeper walk with God – in unexpected ways.

I. Jesus' Unexpected Consciousness (Mark 11:11)

¹¹ And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve.

A. Observations at the Temple

1. The Place God Chose to Live – His Father's House (**Luke 2**)
2. The Place God Chose for Sacrifice and Prayer

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B. Jesus Planned the Temple House-cleaning – It was not “spur of the moment” [like Sodom and Gomorrah – Genesis 18:20-21 ²⁰ And the LORD said, “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, ²¹ I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know.”

1. He was well aware of what was happening and planned His actions for a few hours later
2. Do we wonder if God knows or cares about our current crisis? **“How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever?” (Psalm 13:1)**
3. He knows – He gives time for repentance and for people to determine who they are. He is revealing the Wheat and Tares; God and people know us by our fruit

II. Jesus’ Unexpected Curse (Mark 11:12-14)

¹² Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. ¹³ And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ In response Jesus said to it, “Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.”

A. No Fruit for Food

1. Leaves indicated fruit – appearance without production
2. Remember, our fruit is for others, not ourselves

B. A Picture of Fruitless Hypocrisy in the Temple

1. Hypocrisy is an intentional appearance with no substance (actors) – 7 times in **Matthew 23**, Jesus says, **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!”**
2. America started with Biblical principles – **Alexis de Tocqueville:**

Upon my arrival in the United States, the religious aspect of the country was the first thing that struck my attention; and the longer I stayed there, the more I perceived the great political consequences resulting from this new state of things, to which I was unaccustomed. In France, I had almost always seen the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom marching in opposite directions. But in America, I found they were intimately united and that they reigned in common over the same country.

3. Where are we today – especially in the majority of our churches?
 - a. Low or no biblical worldview
 - b. **“Go along to get along”** and **“Nickels and Noses”** philosophies [North Atlanta Church accepting and promoting homosexuality
 - c. Have you noticed that most Christians applaud the people who defied ungodly authority in the Bible but refuse to imitate them?

III. Jesus’ Unexpected Confrontation (Mark 11:15-19) [2 Slides]

¹⁵ So they came to Jerusalem. Then 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. ¹⁶ And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. ¹⁷ 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.’ ”**

¹⁸ And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching. ¹⁹ When evening had come, He went out of the city.

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A. The “Gentle Jesus” Turned the Tables in the Temple Courts

1. Stone Tables
2. More than personal offense – Defending His Father (**John 2:17** cf. **Psalm 69:9**) and the Non-Jews
Isaiah 56:7 – House of prayer for the nations; **56:5** – **better than sons and daughters**
Have you noticed that the church was not born in preaching but in Prayer (Acts 1-2)?

B. The Jews Forgot Their Mission

1. Set up business in the **Court of the Gentiles** instead of the **SW corner of the Temple mount**
 2. They gouged the people with high prices [In times of **Hurricane Andrew** – Merchants raised prices on bottled water
 3. Remember the **WHY** we do God’s work, not just the **WHAT**; why do we do what we do as Christians? We can do right things for wrong reasons –
[I want GNA because I want the perks that come with Him, like my grandchildren growing up with freedom instead of oppression, but do I want HIM?
 4. **The people Jesus cast out** of the temple were in the right place doing right things for wrong reasons – they were in the temple but not in the spirit of the temple; they were supposed to help people into God’s presence but out of sync with him – **businessmen, not worshipers**
 5. Jesus’ Concern for them – quotes **Jeremiah 7:11** – calling them back as Jeremiah
 - a. Reminder of the outcome of rejecting God’s prophet – Babylonians
 - b. Prediction of future destruction – by Romans AD 70; same calendar day
1. We are not to rise up and physically attack the hypocrites of our day but take a stand for what is right.
 2. We base right and wrong on the Bible and apply it to all of life, including our political world.
 3. The answer to America’s crisis is God, not political leaders, not even Donald Trump.
 4. **“We the people”** must return to God in prayer and principle.
 - a. **Dr. Benjamin Rush’s conversation with John Adams:**
Upon my return from the army to Baltimore in the winter of 1777, I sat next to John Adams in Congress, and upon my whispering to him and asking him if he thought we could succeed in our struggle with Great Britain, he answered me, **“Yes, if we fear God and repent of our sins.”**
 - b. Numerous days of fasting, prayer, and humiliation

In his diary on June 1, 1774, George Washington wrote, “Went to church, fasted all day.”

5. Keep Asking – Mark 11:20-21, 24 [2 Slides

²⁰Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. ²¹And Peter, remembering, said to Him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.”
. . . ²⁴Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive *them*, and you will have *them*.