

Basic

The Parables of Jesus

The Withered Fig-Tree

Matthew 21:17-22

Teaching aim

To show the danger of refusing God's grace and not accepting the Saviour.

Memory verse

If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer. Matthew 21:22

Activities

- Under 8s Activity Sheet "The Parables of Jesus of Jesus - 1".
- Over 8s Activity Sheet "The Parables of Jesus - 2".

Resources

Music

- JP 11 Ask! Ask! Ask!
JP 27 Cleanse me from my sin, Lord

Prayer points

Thank God that:

- He allows us to repent of our sins and trust in Him.

Pray for:

- The wisdom to be able to serve God in our everyday lives.
- Any of our friends who have not yet trusted in Jesus.

Setting the scene

Perhaps the best known verse in the Bible is John 3:16. In it we find the great love that God had for lost mankind; a love so great that He sent His One and Only Son to die that we might live, if we believe in Him.

Some people think that, because God is a God of love, even if they do not accept the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, they will somehow be forgiven.

It may be a great surprise to the children that Jesus would curse the fig-tree for He could equally well have caused it to bear fruit. Explain to them that Jesus used this parable to teach His disciples some lessons about bearing fruit and judgment.

Producing Fruit

God wants us to produce fruit in our lives and not just have a worldly show of religion. He gives us all enough time and chances to produce this fruit but, if we fail, we will suffer the consequences.

Q. What does it mean to produce fruit? - Explain that all have sinned, that we are not able to help ourselves and that we must come to the Lord Jesus Christ for Salvation. To bear fruit also means working for the Lord Jesus Christ and telling others of the Good News.

Q. What sort of things could you do to bear fruit for the Lord Jesus Christ? - Draw to their attention the fact that this does not mean just telling people about the Lord Jesus Christ but that they should live their lives in such a way that their friends will know that there is something different about them.

Why did Jesus curse the tree?

Our Lord's action was not one of anger. It is not always anger that condemns a person. The tree was faulty, a failure, so its time for judgement had come.

When a judge sits in judgement over a court case and a person is found guilty, the judge pronounces sentence. The judge is not angry with the person but he must sentence him for the crime he has committed.

One day we will all come before God as Judge. Although we are all guilty, if, and only if, we are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ alone for Salvation, we will be pardoned because Jesus has paid the penalty for us. However, if we insist in not accepting God's pardon, we will be condemned just as the fig-tree was condemned.

God's justice will be absolutely fair, none will be able to say in that day that it is not, for God has provided a way of Salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Faith and Prayer

Jesus used the cursing of the fig-tree to teach His disciples a practical lesson about faith and prayer. The disciples commented "How soon is the fig-tree withered away!" Matt. 21:20 and, in reply, Christ gave them a talk on the importance of having faith when we pray - "... all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" Matt. 21:22.

Explain to the children that this is not to be understood as an assurance that God will grant every request we make, or give us whatever we ask for. We have to pray in accordance with the will of God which we find by studying God's Word, the Bible. We, therefore, have to study the Bible every day and learn more about Him and what He has planned for us and the world.

Summing up

Jesus is teaching us two important truths in this passage:

- i If we do not repent and accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, we will be judged just as the fig-tree was judged.
- ii When we pray we should do so believing that we will receive what we ask for. In order for this to happen, we must study God's Word to see what His will is and then pray in His will.

The Withered Fig-Tree Word Search

A	S	F	R	U	I	T	K	A	E	N	D
D	I	Y	T	F	W	I	L	L	A	B	I
S	E	A	E	G	I	I	V	E	R	N	S
T	O	Y	J	O	U	G	:	S	L	E	C
E	K	A	E	N	D	Y	T	O	Y	U	I
C	W	I	S	L	L	F	I	R	N	D	P
I	:	K	U	N	O	C	K	Y	E	A	L
T	N	D	S	T	H	E	Y	D	O	E	E
Y	O	R	W	I	L	L	Y	B	Y	E	S
O	M	O	U	N	T	A	I	N	P	E	N
E	D	T	W	I	T	H	E	R	O	Y	O
B	E	L	I	E	V	E	Y	U	Y	Y	.

Hidden in the grid above are 10 words listed below which are all connected with the Parable of the Fig-Tree. Can you find them? You may move up, down, across or diagonally.

fig-tree, Jesus, sea, early, mountain, wither, fruit, disciples, city, believe

Memory Verse

When you have found all the words, the remaining letters, without the extra 'Ys', read from left to right give the **Memory Verse**. Write out the verse in the spaces below.

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