LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

Matthew 21 (Part 2) :18-46

The Rejection of Christ

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · April 18, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Last week we began as you guys remember in this chapter when we began this chapter we began an absolutely huge Prophetic Shift in what is going on in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ as Jesus came into Jerusalem On this last trip before his betrayal and arrest and trial and crucifixion Something enormous happened in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and that is that Jesus came in and and was He allowed his disciples for the very first time ever to declare him to be publicly The Messiah as we said before up to this point. It was always don't tell anybody don't tell anybody now it's it's we're out we're going for broke and and and he's just allowing the whole thing to happen and We're and what we're seeing here is how the religious leaders Responded to that when Jesus was declared Messiah the people are all pumped But the religious leaders are bothered they're annoyed by the whole thing when they hear The children the little children declaring him to be the son of David and so forth they come to Jesus and they Rebuke the little children to him and they tell him to rebuke them and they say, you know Tell these kids to be quiet. Don't you hear what they're saying? And of course, this is just it underscores where they're at, you know where these what the religious leaders are not accepting of who Jesus is and so forth and And and and it's kind of like he's giving him this last chance, you know to respond favorably to who he is and to Accept he knows they're not going to but he's giving them this last opportunity we're and and from this point on we're seeing a lot of just Huge Responses from the religious leaders to Jesus Jesus to the religious leaders and we come here in We're by the way in the 18th verse of this chapter we come to an event which is taking place on the second day after Jesus's arrival to Jerusalem and it seems like a Fairly insignificant event, but it's actually quite large and and let's read it beginning in verse 18 and we're gonna kind of Read a little bit and then stop and talk a little bit about it So we will get through it all I promise you but it says in the morning verse 18 as he was returning to the city He became hungry and seeing a fig tree by the wayside He went to it and found nothing on it, but only leaves stop there if you would please for just a moment Let's just just kind of talk about this for a minute I'm not a big fig fan. So I had to kind of do a little research on figs and that sort of thing I don't like figs.

I've never liked fig Newton's I was thrilled to death when they came out with other flavors started putting other fruit inside, you know, these Newton's and so So I Didn't know anything about figs and I had to do a little looking into it and find out and I did discover that Figs grow or Begin to appear I should say on the tree before the leaves actually show up. Isn't that strange? It's it's really different from what we would normally expect from other fruit bearing trees But before the leaves even pop out these early figs Begin on the tree and then they grow and they ripen and then the leaves come out on The the tree and by the time the leaves come and by the time the tree is in full leaf The figs are actually much riper than before and and good for eating So we're told that Jesus is on his way To the city once again, and he sees this fig tree and he says that it's it's in full leaf Now what does that mean that means that the figs have probably been growing on the branches for some time now and by this time ought to start being ripe but he investigates the tree and finds nothing on the branches and That's what we're actually going to see now is the response to this thing because it's it's very interesting to say the least Look in the middle of verse 19 It says and he said to it speaking directly to the tree may no fruit ever come from you again Crazy statement to stay to a tree you have to admit But it tells us and the fig tree withered at once All right Now stop there again, please Let's talk about this. This is strange. I don't know about you I don't go around talking to trees But I suppose if you're the creator and you're speaking to your creation He has the right to do that and he does and he speaks to this tree and it begins to wither and what's interesting about This is of all the recorded miracles that our Lord Jesus does in the gospel accounts This is the only one that has a negative reaction the only one Everybody every other time he touches somebody speaks to somebody or whatever in some kind of miraculous work it results in healing Deliverance raising from the dead you name it not this time this time.

It's different This time he says a word of death May you? never Bear fruit again That's it. And this tree begins to shrivel up from the root immediately now We know that this was We don't at this point yet in our study. We don't really know why Jesus has kind of done this It's a little puzzling you have to admit. I mean it seems out of character Does it not for somebody to seem to kind of get annoyed with a tree because it didn't happen to bear fruit So I'm gonna curse the thing it almost kind of sounds or looks on the surface of things like Jesus is kind of Abusing his power, you know I remember as a younger man reading this this passage and always kind of scratching my head thinking that's weird You know, I mean, that's just it's it's a little bit strange Well, we'll try to explain things here as we go but the point is we know that the Disciples were pretty amazed by this whole thing as we go on and read in verse 20 look with me in your Bible, it says that when the disciples saw it meaning the the Shriveling of the tree they marveled saying how did the fig tree wither at once or how did it happen so quickly and So verse 21 and Jesus answered them truly I say to you if you have faith and do not doubt you will not only do what has been done for the fig tree But

even if you say to this mountain be taken up and thrown into the sea it will happen And by the way, that was a common Jewish Statement that people would make during that time as And it would be used is in a way of saying even if you're dealing with an insurmountable Issue that would appear to be a mountain, you know You can speak with the words of faith and and it will be removed and so forth And then he ends with this conclusion in verse 22.

We can't miss out on this verse 22 in your Bible Look with me it says and whatever you ask in prayer you will receive if you have faith Okay, this is interesting. Now. This is one of the reasons I used to scratch my head when I read this passage because I thought Okay, so Jesus is hungry sees this tree which Advertises figs because as I said when they're in full leaf that would suggest or or literally advertise there are figs here finds none Curses the thing and then proceeds to use this as an object lesson for faith and I always kind of thought Wow, that's a lot of trouble to go to just to remind these guys about faith And it always kind of even bugged me a little to be completely honest with you these guys have been walking around with Jesus for a long time and they've seen a lot of amazing things and Why he would feel the necessity To curse this fig tree to convey a reminder to them about the power of faith You know and I gotta tell you here I read a lot of commentaries about this passage as I was doing my own Personal study and there are people who believe that that was the only reason the fig tree was cursed so that Jesus could use it as an object lesson. Hey, listen, don't marvel You'll be able to do stuff like this to just have faith and and and and then they just and they move on and they Apply no other insight or no other attempt to understand this event beyond the simple what we read right here And I have to tell you to be quite frank with you today that I think that they are missing the point I think that Jesus is saying more in Parable form without words than just simply a reminder of yeah You can do this if they're you know The if you have the faith and so forth and I want to talk to you this morning about what Jesus is saying But before I do let's be careful not to skip over what he did say Verbally to the disciples about faith again. He basically, you know when they marveled about this He came back and said, you know Hey, you know don't don't marvel because listen This is going to be something you're going to be seeing in the kingdom of God from this point on in fact You're not only gonna see this kind of stuff.

You're gonna see even greater stuff. You're gonna see even situations where an Insurmountable issue will be removed as you pray According to faith and so forth and this is a wonderful promise. I love this promise in God's Word. I Wish I could Talk about God's Word Without saying but all the time, you know, I mean, I really do It would be nice just to be able to lay it out and say well, here's what it says. And there you go but You know, there's there's always there's always been people who?

will focus in on a particular verse of the word and ignore the rest of the counsel of God's Word and they will focus in on one particular promise to an unhealthy degree and and that has been done in this situation This this statement and particularly the summary of it, which is given to us in verse 22 ask whatever you want in prayer and And you will receive it if you have faith that statement has been taken by many people and understood by them as a blanket guarantee For whatever you want whenever you want it All you got to do is ask and you got to ask with faith and it basically kind of turns God into this cosmic vending machine and If we just put in the right coinage and push the button He's obligated to give us whatever we ask the coinage being faith Because we've put in the right amount into the machine sort of a thing The problem is it ignores a vast Information within the scriptures about the conditions for prayer And some of you might be bothered by that word. Well pastor Paul. I didn't know there were conditions to prayer I thought when we dealt with God it was he's an unconditional. Well, no, that's that's not listen. His love is unconditional I'll grant you that he loves you unconditionally and as far as salvation is concerned.

There's even a condition on that you got to believe You have to you know expend faith, it's not by works It's by faith, but there's still a condition involved and with prayer There are conditions and let me just show you a few of them and it's important for us to see this less we kind of run off half-cocked like a frankly a good number of people in the body of Christ have done and Done a lot of damage in in the in the process the first condition To to prayer is that we are praying according to God's will and this is echoed for us in 1st John Chapter 5 and I'll put it up on the screen here It says and this is the confidence that we have toward him that if we ask anything according to his will He hears us and if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask we know that we have the request that we have asked of Him the reason I love this this passage Particularly as it rates to relates to balancing the issue of of prayer and faith if because it reminds us something It reminds us God is not a vending machine He's a thinking rational sovereign being who oftentimes will say No, I Mean for all the parents in this room Didn't you say no to your children sometimes because what they asked of you was you knew was not good for them Of course you did those of you that haven't been parents yet Just wait all the times you were frustrated at mom and dad because they said no You're gonna do the same thing and here's why because you have the foresight to look into the situation and know that what's being Asked isn't the best thing and so you say no and Do you think that our parenting is superior to God's? What parent would say to their child listen if you just ask the right way, I'll give you anything You know and this kind of this blank check sort of approach to to whatever they might want good grief Can you imagine I? Love the fact that God Knows what's best and we're told in the Word of God that one of the conditions in prayer is that we ask according to his Will and John reminds us that when we ask according to his will we have a confidence And it's important that we learn to understand his will By the way, his will isn't to indulge you and your every whim I'm sorry to say It's the fact of the

matter the second condition is that we got to pray with the right motives James gives this to us in the fourth chapter of his letter when he says you ask in other words you pray about things But you don't get them Why because you're asking wrongly? And you may not even realize at the time, but you're asking Because you simply want to spend what you get whatever it might be on Your pleasures or you're doing it for you. You're not really praying You know Really for somebody else you're praying for you.

There's a lot of you in there. There's a lot of God I need this because I think I need this and it's and it's actually a Selfish motive at the at the root of it and and God knows that and he sees that and sometimes we don't That's why we get disappointed. Sometimes when we pray we ask God for something and we think our motives are completely pure But then again, who are we to judge? I mean, we're not good at judging our own motives at all, right? And God knows and sees exactly what's going on under the surface and he loves you enough to say no sometimes And I'm glad he does.

I'm glad my heavenly father knows what's best and I'm glad that there are conditions related to prayer and then the third condition that we see in the Word of God is that there might be a block in our prayer and our Request for prayer and that could be sin from Psalm 66. It says if I had cherished Iniquity in my heart the Lord would not have listened Sometimes there's just a blockade in our lives in some form of unconfessed sin or something That's going on and we're praying about some particular thing or whatever. We're not seeing it happen Because there's issues there's just issues. We're refusing to deal with And God knows that we need to get those out of the way so that we can have that relationship with him And that the things that he gives us are not going to hurt us in the long run Because of these issues of unconfessed sin and so forth So there are conditions you can you know, we so we have to read here in Matthew 21 Where Jesus makes this promise about faith? We have to understand this isn't just a blank check and maturity would tell us so and the understanding of God's Word confirms it So Jesus but Jesus is making the point here that that the disciples could expect to see powerful moves of God as they pray as they pray according to faith and and And with the right motives and and so on and so forth and it's a wonderful statement that he makes here.

I love it But is that all he's saying? No, I think he's saying more. I Think Jesus is using this this this event for lack of a better term of the cursing of the fig tree as As a kind of parable to teach you and I and talk to you and I about fruit inspection He is the master fruit inspector And not only is that but he wants you and I to be that as well You recall back in Matthew chapter 7 when we were studying there and this is in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus told us that There would come in the body of Christ individuals who would appear or Proclaim if you will to have a prophetic Gifting and they would come and they would want to exercise that gift in the body of Christ But he said some of these people are phonies. They're

frauds and they look good They talk just like you and I but in their heart there's something else going on all together How in the world you're gonna know let me put this up as a reminder from Matthew chapter 7 beware He said of false. That's that's phony untrue prophets They come to you in sheep's clothing meaning looking just like a believer, but inwardly in their heart They are actually ravenous wolves how in the world you're gonna know when you see him.

Well, you can tell by their fruit You can tell by their fruit you look at their lives You look at the fruit of their lives and you can tell what's really going on. So what is Jesus telling us here? How you gonna figure out who the false prophets are little fruit inspection, right? We're gonna look at their lives Do you know that we're told in the Word of God to investigate people in leadership? How's their marriage?

How are their children? How are their finances? I mean, you know, does this guy fly off the handle when somebody? Opposes him in any way You know, is he unkind? You know, is he patient or is he impatient?

We got to look at their lives We got to look at their fruit and he says, you know what ultimately they you'll know them You'll know them by the fruit of their lives. So be a fruit inspector that's what Jesus is basically telling us in this passage and This is what he's also doing here in Matthew 21 In this issue or this event with the fig tree He is a fruit inspector look with me again in verse 19 look in your Bible It says and seeing the fig tree by the wayside or along the path he went to it and found nothing except what he did find leaves remember what leaves tell you it's an advertisement fruitful it's saying something there's fruit here but he goes to look at the branches and finds none okay now this is really interesting because I believe that this is too coincidental with everything else that's going on here in Matthew chapter 21 for this to be just a simple isolated event where Jesus curses a tree in order to teach his disciples a lesson on faith he does do that he does teach that lesson but I think there's more going on here because just as the leaves of this tree advertised fruitfulness that wasn't there that in fact there was barrenness there Jesus is finding the very same thing to be going on among the leadership of Israel and even though their outward advertisement is fruitfulness and they have this glorious temple that is they're so proud of that what is really going on behind the surface or under the surface is barrenness and so forth and you know Jesus is going to address this and confront this very thing in just a couple of chapters ahead so let's we're gonna go I'll do this on the screen for you but in just in two chapters from now he's gonna say woe to you scribes and Pharisees hypocrites look at this for you clean the outside of the cup and the plate but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence he says it actually is a kind of blindness he says these you blind Pharisees what is he saying here the outside says one thing the inside says another you are saying on the outside fruitful fruitful but on the inside there's corruption right that's what he's confronting them about something

that is different than what's being advertised what is the fig tree all about it's about something different than what's being advertised the leaves say fruitfulness the branches say it's not there it's not happening there is no fruit growing on these branches so this is a message I think this is a parable I think Jesus is giving a message not just to Israel and the leadership of Israel he's giving a message to you and I too about this whole issue of what's really going on under the surface what's really going on in our hearts what's really happening on the inside tells us to that the work of the Savior is that of fruit inspector he's the searcher of fruit he's looking in your life and he's looking in my life he's asking the tough question where's the fruit where's the real life where's the genuineness of what it really means to walk with God serve God live for God where's the reality of your confession it's one thing to say I believe it's another thing to be bearing fruit you can say all day long I'm an apple tree I'm an apple tree I'm an apple tree Jesus says fine where are the apples you know he he actually kind of outlined this further in a in a in a parable in this chapter I'm gonna ask you to skip ahead here just a little bit skip down to verse 33 would you verse 33 of this very same chapter look what Jesus says it says here another parable there was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a wine press in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants and went into another country and when the season for fruit drew near note that he sent his servants to the tenants to what get his fruit right there he's owed that fruit and the tenants took his servants and beat one killed another and stoned another again he sent other servants more than the first and they did the same to them finally he sent his son saying to them saying they will respect my son but when the tenants saw the Sun they said to themselves this is the air come let us kill him and have his inheritance and they took him in through him out of the vineyard and killed him and when there for the owner of the vineyard comes what will he do to those tenants verse 41 they said to him and he's talking to the religious leaders about this and they said well he'll put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruit in their seasons Jesus said to them have you never read in the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone this was the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes therefore I tell you the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people look at this producing its fruits in other words who are bearing fruit and the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces and when it falls on anyone it will crush him and when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard this parable or his parables they perceived that he was speaking about them they finally got it and although they were seeking to arrest him they feared the crowds because they the crowds held him to be a prophet I think this is too great a coincidence to hear Jesus talking about the lack of fruit the lack of of of a return in this in this parable that he's giving and this cursing of the fig tree these are they're happening right in the same time it's happening in the same chapter Matthew is speaking to us about this whole issue this whole concern that God has that the people of God would be genuine and would bear the fruit of the

kingdom so what does Jesus do in this as he walks out this parable of the fig tree what does he say to the fig tree gee I hope you do a better job next year no he actually curses the fig tree to the point where he says may you never bear fruit again and it says the fig tree withered from that point on there there was no fruitfulness for the fig tree after that now there are a lot of people who make the connection between the fig tree and Israel because if a fig tree is used in the Old Testament to symbolize Israel and that may very well be the case because you know in just 35 roughly 35 years from from this point when this fig tree is cursed Israel will cease to be a nation when Rome finally has had their their fill and they will come in 8070 and they will break through the gates of Jerusalem and they will destroy the temple and they will burn the city and Israel will lose its national identity that crazy in 8070 all that took place is God done with Israel no fact the Old Testament speaks of prophecies that Israel will be reborn we saw that happen there are people in this room here today that saw that prophecy fulfilled in their lifetime in the late 1940s when Israel regained national status as a fulfillment of prophecy it's already happened funny you know I like to read some of George Mueller's writings he lived in the 1800s he talks a lot about the restoration of Israel for him it hadn't happened yet but he was absolutely positively sure it was gonna take place he just didn't know when for you and I it's past history crazy but that cursing of the fig tree was a statement made to Israel you will not bear fruit anymore that baton has passed and it has gone where to the church what did Jesus say in that parable to Israel I will find tenants who will bear my fruit Jesus said I have come that you might bear fruit fruit that will last guys it's us it's the church but listen lest we kind of get a little cocky and think oh wow now yeah they see we took over aren't we cool just understand this we are subject to the same fruit inspector who came and inspected the branches of Israel and found them empty and barren and I think that this is a very sobering kind of a reminder for the church as well and and let me let let's let's go back and finish these verses that we we we can skipped over i i wanna i would be careful not to miss them here because there are a couple more examples given to us here in matthew twenty one about just how far the jewish leadership had slipped into apostasy first twenty three but they're with me and when he entered the temple the chief priest in the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching is said by what authority are you doing uh... are you doing these things and who gave you this authority jesus answered them i'll also will ask you one question if you tell me the answer then i will also tell you by what authority i do these things stop there for just a moment this is one of those great you've had somebody there is a restart to talk about god or the bible and you realize into the conversation they really don't want to talk all they want to do is make you look stupid or if if they can you know make you look dumb and like an idiot and then they want to walk away they might ask you a question and the answer to that question could genuinely change their life but they don't want the answer they're not looking for the answer when you and i just start spouting you know what we think and and then they come back to go yeah well if that's the case

and then they did becomes this the verbal spar we've all but down that road you know and and walked away and and realized wow that did a lot of nothing jesus has the ability to see exactly what's going on in the hearts of these men he knows that they're asking questions but they're not looking for answers he knows that they're not even genuine about wanting to have a exchange of information he knows that there really isn't any willingness to be up front and honest and so he says fine you've asked me a question to what will make a deal here i'll ask you also a question and if you answer my question i'd promise you i'll answer yours and so jesus goes on here in verse twenty five and he says the baptism of john where did it come from from heaven or from man and they discussed it among themselves saying all right if we say from heaven well then he's gonna say well then why don't you believe him but if we say i was just for man well we don't want to do that were afraid of the people because they they think john was a prophet they might pull us out and stone us to death right here so they answered jesus and said we don't know and he said to them fine neither will i tell you by what authority i do these things you see what jesus just did he exposed the duplicity of their hearts and the unwillingness uh... you know to even have a genuine conversation they didn't they didn't want to have an exchange of ideas all they want to do was try to make jesus look stupid and he wasn't going to have any part of it and it's sad you know when that's the case but but but you know the religious leaders demanded that jesus be forthcoming and they were completely unwilling to do it themselves and then jesus further revealed this kind of duplicity and dishonesty look at look with me in verse twenty eight he says what do you think a man had two sons and he went to the first and he said son go and work in the vineyard today and he answered i will or excuse me i will not but afterward he changed his mind and he went and he went to the other son and said the same and he answered i go sir but did not go which of the two did the will of his father they said well the first jesus said to them truly i say to you the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of god before you for john came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him but the tax collectors and the prostitutes they believed him and even when you saw you did not afterward change your minds and believe him see the religion or the facade of religion that the leaders of israel had was to say all the right things but it was a an empty confession he totally tells this parable this guy's got two sons he tells one of them to go into the vineyard and work in the sun goes you know i don't know i'm not going to do that but the later on he thinks better of it and goes and the second son who is a picture of these guys you know says yes father i will go and work in the vineyard but he doesn't go and what is that what is the picture that we're seeing here once again the advertisement on the outside says yes fruitfulness serving god loving god yes god yes god but in the heart it's a no i will not i will not do that i will not go there i will not serve you and jesus is using this to expose the duplicity of their hearts the advertisement of fruitfulness when in fact there is barrenness on the branches so where does all this leave us it leaves us right where we started with

a savior who's a fruit inspector and if jesus were to step into your life to inspect the fruit on your branches what would he find would he find uh... a profession or even an advertisement of fruitfulness but nothing beyond or would he find the genuineness of a life lived for god and that's really the important question that we all have to deal with here today we're still subject to the same fruit inspector and we need to ask some tough questions in our own lives why am i here why did god put me here what's my life all about we're only given so much time in this life just so much time lately the lord has been just convicting me up one side down the other about how much time i waste for my own passions and pleasures and i'm ashamed to even admit it to you but it's a fact my life has been lived to a large degree for me and i want that to change you know i really want to live for him i really want to be his servant and i want i want on the day when we all stand before him and he looks at the fruit of our lives to see what is there i want him to be happy with what he finds you might say well pastor paul how do we even get started bearing fruit for the lord well jesus said it this way abide in me abide in me and you will bear fruit apart from me you can't do a thing so start this way abide in me in other words stay connected and just begin to serve just be willing to serve so many people say to me you know pastor paul i don't know what my gift is and what they're really saying under the surface is i don't want to do anything because i don't know what i'm supposed to do so i'm just going to kind of sit around and wait for god to i guess drop it out of heaven or for a hand to write on the wall at night something like that and you know what i'm i'm here to tell you you'll never get involved you'll never get going you'll never start serving if you have that attitude we have to begin to come to realize i was put here in this life on this earth to serve god to live for him and to bear fruit for the kingdom and it's work that the bible says has already been planned out in ephesians chapter five it tells us that we are the workmanship of christ created to do good works that work with that were laid out in advance so you and i don't even have to go out and start you know finding we just gotta get busy and start serving those good works are going to come as we open our heart to serve to give our lives away to be fruitful for the kingdom i don't want to be one of those people who takes what god has given and digs a hole in the ground and buries it and then when he comes back i say well here's what you gave me i kept it safe little dirty little worse for wear but you know here it is i don't want to be that person i want to be the person that bears fruit but i realize in and of myself i can't do it i can't bear fruit not by myself i have to abide in the vine if any fruits gonna show up on our branches it's going to be because we are receiving the life-giving sap of the route of the tree and that is jesus i am the vine he said you are the branches remain in me and you will much fruit that will last