Have faith in God

Mark 11:12-26

Key Verse 11:22

“Have faith in God,” Jesus answered.”

Once I had a chance to visit Billy Graham’s library in Charlotte in NC when I attended Kimnet conference. While I was there I found there were many famous quotations of Billy Graham on the walls. Many were impressive, but one got my attention the most. It says “When we believe in Jesus, supernatural power will work for us.” I was fascinated by the word ‘supernatural power.’ This power is obviously not natural power. It is supernatural power. And the power is not our power but God’s power. It means it is an extra power. This extra power is available for everyone who believes in Jesus. I wondered why I was so attracted to the declaration. I was moved by the supernatural power because I needed it. As we all know no one can save himself from the power of sin and death. Only supernatural power can save us from the power of sin and death. Furthermore as we live for the glory of God and discharge God’s mission in our lives we need supernatural power, the power from above. With our own power we cannot even take care of ourselves properly. We are breathless even to discharge our human obligations. But with the supernatural power from above and from God we can be more than conqueror in all we do. We can be victorious in the new year. So today we would like to learn how to receive such super natural power from above.

My message has three parts. Part I. He found nothing but leaves (v.12-14). Part II. My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations (v.15-19) Part III. It will be done for them. (v.20-25)

**Part I. He found nothing but leaves (v.12-14).**

Look at verses 12-14.

**12The 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. 14Then he said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard him say it.**

It was last week of Jesus. Today’s event happened when Jesus visited Jerusalem where he was crucified. Today’s passage starts with the word, “The next day”. The author wants to make connection between today’s event and yesterday’s one. What happened the day before? Jesus entered Jerusalem triumphantly as king. Then he went to the temple court. Look at **Mark 11:11** which is just one verse before today’s passage. “**Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.”**

Now The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. Then he saw a fig tree in distance. It was 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. The word ‘because’ can be interpreted as ‘indeed’. If we look at in this way, Jesus knew it was not the season for figs. So he knew he could not expect fruit. But he went to find if there was anything. But indeed it did not have anything because it was not the season. This interpretation removes any misunderstanding that Jesus was angry because he could not find anything. So when Jesus said, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again” Jesus was not emotional. He said in a controlled manner. He said in the hearing of his disciples. So probably Jesus was using the fig tree as an instrument to teach something.

What could be the lesson Jesus wants to teach? There are two possible interpretations. The first one is Jesus was pronouncing his judgment against religious leaders in the temple. Some people even go all the way to say it is judgment against temple, but Jesus talked about the destruction of temple in Mark chapter 13. So arguably it is more reasonable to see it as his judgment against religious leaders. “Figs” usually were used as the symbol of the Israelites. But the fig tree can be used as the symbol of religious leaders who were doing all religious activities and ceremonies but did not bear fruit God was looking for. That was what Jesus found out the night before. As indeed Jesus expected there was not true fruit in the religious leaders like the fig tree. Although the fig tree had many leaves it did not have any fruit Jesus was seeking for. The religious leaders looked beautiful outwardly but inwardly they did not bear the fruit Jesus was looking for.

The second possible interpretation is Jesus showed his authority over nature as the sovereign King when he cursed the fig tree. **Romans 9:17-21** reveals God’s sovereign authority.

**17For Scripture says to Pharaoh: “I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” 18Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden. 19One of you will say to me: “Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?” 20But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? “Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’” 21Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?**

God hardened the heart of Pharaoh to proclaim his name and power in all the earth. But Pharaoh cannot complain to God saying “I disobeyed you because you hardened my heart.” It is because God has sovereign authority over all men because he is the Creator God. It is as if pots cannot complain to a potter saying “Why did you make me like this?” or “Why did you change your mind?” As the maker of pots the potter has all authority to do whatever he wants with his clay.

When Jesus cursed the fig tree he revealed that he is the sovereign King who has the absolute authority over nature too.

Regardless of two possible interpretations, whether Jesus judged the religious leaders or revealed his authority as the king, one thing becomes clear.

It is the importance of bearing fruit Jesus is seeking for in our lives.

Jesus’ curse of the fig tree teachers the importance of bearing fruit that Jesus is looking for in our lives. We may be like religious leaders. We may perform many religious activities. However, we may not bear the fruit Jesus is looking for in our lives.

We cannot make any excuses for the fruit Jesus is seeking in our lives. We cannot say “Oh, it is not the season for us to bear fruit. Therefore we do not have fruit.” Whether it is ‘in season’ or ‘out of season’ does not matter. We must bear fruit Jesus is looking for in our lives. Jesus said in **John 15:16a “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last”**

**2 Timothy 4:2** reads, **“Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction”**

The fruit Jesus is seeking in our lives is to be faithful to his calling. To preach the word in season and out of season. Whether we are in season and able to bear fruit or whether we are out of season and we cannot bear fruit does not matter. He wants us to be faithful for his calling. And this is probably fruit he is looking for in our lives.

**Part II. ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? (v.15-19)**

Look at verses 15-19.

**15On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, 16and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. 17And 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.’” 18The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching. 19When evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.**

When Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple courts he became angry. So he began to drive out those who were buying and selling there. “**He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, 16and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts.**” This is the only time Jesus was violent. According to the Bible Jesus did not even break the bruised reed and no one can hear his shout or angry voice. But at the temple courts in Jerusalem Jesus was very angry. And he told them, “**“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.’”**

What Jesus quoted was the combination of Isaiah and Jeremiah. **Isaiah 56:6-7** reads, **“6And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant—7these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.”**

At God’s time redeemed foreigners will gather together to his house, and his house will be called a house of prayer for all nations. So ‘the house of prayer for all nations’ means ‘the place for all nations, all peoples on earth’. What do they do when they gather to the house of God? They will pray for all nations. God’s house will be the house of prayer for all nations. God’s temple is the place of prayer for the salvation of all nations. God’s house is the place for all nations to come and pray and worship God.

But the religious leaders made it ‘a den of robbers.’ ‘The den of robbers’ means ‘the place where robbers gather together and feel a great security.” The expression ‘den of robbers” is quoted from Jeremiah.

**Jeremiah 7:9-11**

**9“‘Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, 10and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, “We are safe”—safe to do all these detestable things? 11Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the Lord.**

The message of Jeremiah was given to all the people of Judah who went through the gates of the temple to worship the Lord. They were not faithful to the Lord. Although they worshiped the Lord they also worshiped Baals and did many detestable things. But they felt so secure and said, “This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.” They thought that the Lord’s temple would never be destroyed, and they would be secure and safe as long as they came to the temple of the Lord despite all their sins.

So “the den of robbers” are the place where robbers gathered together and felt safe. The religious leaders performed all ritual ceremonies in the temple and they felt they were very secure. But they were robbers, robbing the place where the Gentiles could come and worship. They did not by using the Gentile court to make money, allowing merchants to sell doves and animals and exchange monies.

The temple court is the most convenient place where people can buy animals to sacrifice. Of course the cost must be most expensive to buy animals. Indeed the temple court was the most convenient place for people to change money and purchase animals for sacrifice. And the profit goes to religious leaders.

Why did the religious leaders become robbers? It is because they lost faith in God. They thought they believed in God, but they believed in Baal. They believed in money. They worshipped and served God in a most convenient and comfortable way.

If we apply it for us, it could mean we want to serve God in a most convenient and comfortable way, and we can still feel secure in a church.

What was the response of the religious leaders? Look at verses 18. “**The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.”**

The chief priests and the teachers of the law got so mad that they began looking for a way to kill Jesus. The authority of the chief priests and the teachers of the law were ignored and their pride was hurt so much in public. So they became furious. But they could not kill Jesus because of the fear of the crowd who were amazed at Jesus’ teaching which had the authority of God. When Jesus cleansed the temple, it was the demonstration of his authority as the true King.

When evening came Jesus and his disciple went out of the city. (v.19)

**Part III. It will be done for them (v.20-25)**

Look at verses 20-23.

**20In 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!” 22“Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. 23“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.**

Peter was shocked when he saw the fig tree had withered. The tree was withered from the root. It was completely dried from the root all because of Jesus’ curse. Imagine such picture of a tree withered from the root. It is such a horrible image that we do not want to imagine. Indeed the withered fig free from the root is the symbol of a person judged by God. When Peter saw the tree he remembered what Jesus said.

When Peter said, “**“Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!”** Peter was asking, “Wow! How did it happen? How could it happen? What made it happen? Where did such power and authority come from?” Jesus answered Peter’s unspoken question. So the verse 22 says that Jesus “answered” instead of Jesus “said”. Jesus’ answer is ‘have faith in God.” It means ‘faith in God’ exists. All we need to do is just take it and have it.

Jesus answered **22“Have faith in God,” 23“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.**

Jesus plainly revealed Peter, “to have faith in God” brings such power. When Jesus said to the fig tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again” he spoke by faith in God.

Jesus dramatically reveals the power of faith in this way. He said, “**23“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.”**

Mountain is a sign of immovable object. But mountain moves by one command of man if he says it and does not doubt in his heart. So here there are two things. One has to say. It means he has to speak. **Apostle Paul says, “Therefore we believe and speak.”** The word of faith is important. We need to say it. To say shows our final decision in our hearts. We can think a lot. But when we say it shows our inner decision and it is a final confirmation of our decision. It has power. So we should speak the word of faith all the time rather than the words of doubt, fear and unbelief.

The second is he should not doubt in his heart but believes. This is probably more challenging part. One can say it. But as soon as he says it, he can suffer from doubts. Satan can whisper, “Hey, you are joking. Right? Think about it! How can a mountain move? He cannot disobey God’s natural order. You are asking something against God’s will. Forget it.” If he doubts thinking what he says will not happen it will not happen.

So he has to believe such an impossible things to happen to him. And the third thing is ‘it will be done for him.’ By whom? God. It is not his power who speaks and does not doubt. It is God who will do for the person who spoke and believed in his heart. God will honor his faith and his words of faith.

Again the power does not belong to the person. It belongs to God. So the power is external and super natural power from God for the one who has faith in God.

What do you think Jesus was trying to teach through mountain moving faith? Do you think Jesus was actually asking his disciples to move mountains? Probably not. What does he wants to teach by moving mountains? “Moving mountains” can be compared to ‘be a house of prayer for all nations.’ It can be compared to pray for the salvation of all nations. Think about it! Here we are. Humanly speaking, we cannot even take care of all our duties. Our power is so limited. We are even breathless to discharge our human obligations. But God wants us to become a house of prayer for all nations. God wants us to pray for the salvation of all peoples on earth including his own family members. Isn’t it such an impossible looking task like throwing away a mountain into a sea? Yes, it is!

To go and make disciples of all nations, to overcome our own doubts, to believe the change of our country against all kinds of violence and sins, to change ourselves and our children and our bible students against all kinds of our weaknesses and their weaknesses and our sinful habits and their sinful habits, were all like moving mountains. But faith in God will bring such power and mountain will be moved by God.

Jesus said in **Mark 9:23 “’If you can?” said Jesus. ‘Everything is possible for one who believes.”**

One day **John Wesley** was walking down a street. He overheard someone reading Martin Ruther’s Roman’s commentary. “Faith brings power from God. It is mysterious power…” At that moment John Wesley was truly born again. He kept says, “I need to trust God. I need to trust God” and his ministry took off and he burned England with the fire of the Holy Spirit. Truly what is impossible with man is possible with God, the change of man.

We may all be selfish. We may all want to stay home comfortably in the morning instead of getting up and come to a church to pray together. But God wants us to be a house of prayer for all nations.

Spiritually speaking you and I are spiritual house of God. God dwells in us through his Spirit. And he wants us to become house of prayer for all nations. How can we do so? By faith in God.

[**Ephesians 1:19**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+1:19&version=NIV)

**and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength**

[**Ephesians 3:20**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+3:20&version=NIV)

**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,**

There is super natural power for those who believe in Jesus. That power is the power from above, the power from God.

Now ‘to have faith in God’ is equivalent ‘to pray.’

Look at verses 24-25.

**24Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. 25And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”**

“Have faith in God” means “pray with believing heart”. When we believe we pray. When we do not believe we don’t pray. Why do we want to pray when we do not believe God will answer our prayer? Jesus was saying ‘have faith in God’ is the same as ‘pray by faith.’

Verse 24 does not teach us ‘formula’ to receive answer for our prayers. What he teaches us ‘to trust God’. To have faith in God means to trust God. To pray with faith also means to trust God. It means to believe that God will work. Every power belongs to God. We do not have any power. But we do have one thing, that is, to trust God. That is to believe in God. That is to have faith in God.

In addition to have faith in God, there is one more thing we need to take care of when we want to receive answer for our prayers. It is ‘forgiveness.’ Jesus said, “**25And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”**Jesus was saying, “if you hold anything against anyone, your father in heaven will not forgive your sins.” What happens when our father does not forgive our sins? Our relationship with him will be broken. God cannot answer our prayers due to broken relationship.

Why couldn’t God forgive our sins when we do not forgive others? It is because we do the same things.

So forgive anyone who sins against us is so important matter for us to receive answer for our prayers. Jesus forgave all of our sins. But if we hold anything against anyone and do not forgive that person God cannot answer our prayer. In the new year, we chose year key verse and 3 prayer topics. If we want to receive answer for our prayers, we need to make sure that we forgive everyone who sinned against us.

Jesus answered, “Have faith in God”. “To have faith in God” means “to believe God will work”. My story teaches the same truth.

When I was named as a successor of this ministry I wondered it was really the will of God. So I began to pray and read the whole bible. Then God spoke to me through **Ezekiel 17:24 “All the trees of the forest will know that I the Lord bring down the tall tree and make the low tree grow tall. I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. I the Lord have spoken, and I will do it.”**

What the Lord revealed to me through the verse was ‘the fruitfulness does not depend on who I am but it depends on who the Lord is.” How can the Lord bring down the tall tree and make the low tree grow tall? How can he dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish?” By simply changing the course of the water under the tree. If he changes the course of the water under the tree, he can dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. And the Lord is the Sovereign Lord. The word “Sovereign Lord” is repeated so many times in Ezekiel chapter 17.

No matter how a tree is excellent the tree cannot move itself to the place of water. Excellence of the tree may refer to its height and fruit or any other things. But for the most critical matter of its fruitfulness which is water, the tree cannot do anything because it cannot move. So the Lord reveals our differences in men is nothing. Some of us are tall. Others are short. Some of us are more intelligent. Others are physically strong. Some of us are more disciplined. Others are not But all of these human qualities does not mean anything because we cannot change ourselves.

But what the sovereign Lord will do make difference. What the Lord taught me is “I do not need to fear. I feared greatly “what if I become a director and my ministry will not be prosperous?” That was my greatest fear. The Lord answered me that the fruitfulness does not depend on me but on him who is the sovereign Lord. Not I but he controls the water. And the water is the symbol of the Holy Spirit. If the Sovereign Lord pours out his Holy Spirit upon me and you we will be prosperous even beyond our imagination. If he does not we will dry up even if we are green. If he pours out his Spirit we will be green even if we were dry. By revealing that he chose me by his sovereign choice he removed my fear and doubt from my heart.

On January 1 of this year, I was reminded of the same truth that God is the sovereign Lord and I need to believe he will work and that is what it means to have faith in him.

While I was listening to year key verse testimonies on January 1 of this year, 2 days ago, the Lord reminded me how much almighty power of him was displayed in our lives. He reminded me that he broke the power of sin and death in each of our lives and that was how he saved us. Although we still have weaknesses in our lives we are saved by God who broke the power of death. That is how in the sight of God we became such special people, sons and daughters of God. Although his power is invisible and although we cannot see the broken power of death with our physical eyes, the truth still remains the same. The Lord Almighty, the Sovereign Lord, the King of kings, broke the power of death in our lives and that is how he saved us, and we become his sons and daughters. We are so precious people and we are his treasure in his sight. Now he is working out his salvation in us and through us. He wants to reach out others through us.

When Jesus said, “Have faith in God” it means his disciples should believe God will work his salvation with his sovereign authority and almighty power as the king of kings.

In conclusion, today we learned how we can receive super natural power from God. It is to have faith in him. “Faith in God” exists. We just need to take it and have it. It is to believe that he will work our his salvation work with his almighty power and authority as the King of kings. Truly when we believe in Jesus, we will receive supernatural power from God.

One word: Have faith in God.