

Moving From Palm Sunday to Change-the-World Monday

I grew up attending church. This was the era of flannel graphs in Sunday school.

Palm Sunday was a time of kids with palm branches and conversations about donkeys. The shift then moves to Good Friday and Easter. But if we move too fast, we miss a lesson that Jesus taught to change our world and rock our hearts.

In Mark's telling of the story, he sandwiches the story of the clearing of the temple with the strange story of Jesus killing a fig tree. The depth of the message of Mark 11:12-25 is beyond what I can cover in this post, but let me challenge us with three lessons that could impact the world.

Be on Your Guard Against Hypocrisy

Jesus finds a tree that has lots of leaves, but without any fruit. Moving from there to seeing Jesus disrupting the religious establishment of the time makes the message clear. You can have a lot of the trappings of religious activity, but not be producing any spiritual fruit. This is hypocrisy.

The danger of hypocrisy is that it is easier to see in others and hard to see in ourselves. Hypocrisy insulates our heart from the humility we need to be hungry for more of God. We need to be desperate for God in order to produce fruit out of our connection to Him. I realize that even this post loses its power without the energy of God.

Be Aware of Our Own Draw Toward Racism

In Jesus' day, a reference to a verse in the Scripture is a reference to the whole chapter where it is found. Jesus' reference to, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for

all the nations” comes from Isaiah 56. Isaiah 56 is a word of encouragement to the immigrants living in the land. Jesus’ here matches the challenge that He and the early disciples gave to confront the ethnic superiority of the day.

If we read carefully, we see Jesus getting in trouble again and again for disrupting racial stereotypes. Speaking of immigrants and racism today may be read as a political statement of some kind.

Although I do see racism in both political parties, that is too safe to point that out. Jesus wants to get closer to our heart. Rather than engage in arguments, what if the church led the way by going in the opposite way of love? But even that is too safe.

What about me? So I am committing right now to learning Spanish to a level that I can preach in Spanish. What about you? Will you let God’s Word break through your heart to an actual change that may be uncomfortable?

Prayer Should Not Be a Side Dish

The story of the fig tree is explained by Jesus with a challenge to pray things that require faith. I wrote a book on simple ways to engage in conversation with God. But we must not forget that prayer also has great power to change things. Prayer invites us into a faith adventure with Jesus that should produce fruit. God invites us to change the world with our prayer.

 Are you praying dangerous, audacious prayers? As Lisa Bevere says, “If you are not praying the kind of prayers that scare you, believe me, they are not scaring the enemy.” We need Christians who believe for a life that makes a difference. As Pete Grieg says, “We need to move from survival to revival.” What are you going to ask God for that will make a difference for Jesus’ kingdom?

I believe that if we really let these things past our guard and into our heart, we could change the world. Are you with me? {eoa}

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Kevin Senapatiratne is head spiritual pyromaniac for Christ Connection. Kevin speaks around the United States, helping Christians find the fun of prayer. He is the author of *Enjoying Prayer*. You can learn more about his ministry at .