

Jesus' Advance

Mark 11:12-26

As you read books, watch television shows or movies, there's almost always a consistent writing style. There's always an explanation to begin things, a problem a climax and then a nice conclusion to tie things up. During the climax, especially in war-like movies or books, there's an intense joy from the onlookers as the hero enters the area. The reason for this joy is because everyone is aware that this hero can bring them to victory. They anticipate something from this hero and they believe he can accomplish what they hope and dream. In real life, this happens as well. Think back to Roman triumphal entries. The army goes out, takes over a city, comes back home and there's a triumphal entry. In this case, everyone is excited because their leader accomplished this hope.

On a smaller scale, I can see this even on a family level. By God's grace, my children love me. When they were younger, and almost every night I come home, one of my kids would joyously exclaim, "DADDY!" Sometimes I'd still be in the car. Sometimes, it would be as soon as I would walk in the door. But my entry was one of joy for them! They thought I was amazing and awaited my presence.

This truth ushers us into Mark 11. Here we have Jesus' triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem. This is the popular passage that we have heard on many Palm Sundays – obviously because that scenario was the first palm Sunday. We find that Jesus is entering the city of Jerusalem. He is at the gates, and at the gates of the city there are many people waving palm branches – declaring that Jesus is the Messiah – the One whom God has sent to rescue his people and bring about an eternal Kingdom of peace. This is one of those climax moments. Jesus has been performing miracles for so long. The people are wanting rescue from the Roman oppression and even the demonic oppression – hence they are excited for what Jesus is about to do in Zion – the city of David. They are awaiting the Kingdom arrival.

While Jesus allows this excitement to take place, He is admitting that he is the Messiah and that he has a mission to accomplish. But within his mission, many people begin to be confused – and not only confused, but angry. You see, when Jesus enters the city, he seems to go to one place first: the Temple. There, in the Temple, instead of saying, "Way to go! I'm here and I'll give you what you want," Jesus instead reveals the sinfulness of the Temple.

The climax of the Triumphal entry quickly turns into an apparent destruction of the people's hopes. And then we come upon a very intriguing scenario. Today, on this Palm Sunday, instead of me focusing on the entry, I want to focus on the following verses. The reason is because these following verses show us a reason *why* Jesus came. Or, to put it another way, **the Messiah came to free us to worship God, living in a relationship of dependence on the Lord.** We see this in what I will call "The Fig Tree and Temple Incident."

If you haven't turned in your Bibles already, go to Mark 11. I will be reading section by section, and we'll start with verses 12-14. But let me pray before we read.

¹² On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. ¹³ And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ And he said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard it. ¹

Worship & The Fig Tree Incident

My goal in the message today is to show you, from this text, that Jesus the Messiah came to free us to worship God, living in a relationship of dependence on the Lord. This is not what the religious establishment thought, though. And, many within Israel simply thought they were fine as long as they did "religious" things. But God didn't give us rules so that we could appease him and then ignore him. God made humans to find their greatest delight and satisfaction in worshipping God! Yet, in our sin, we value so many other things more than God. The Bible tells us we are bound in our sins. And the only One who can rescue us from that binding death is the Messiah. Jesus can rescue us from the power, penalty and presence of our sin. And, as Triumphant King, he entered into Jerusalem to show the religious people just how blind they are to their sin. They brought it into the Temple, and thought they were good. We see this idea in the Fig Tree scenario.

Jesus is welcomed into Jerusalem, and then, Mark tells us that after leaving Jerusalem, Jesus sees a fig tree and curses it. What's that all about? Well, the story of this fig tree reminds me of the advertising that goes on all around us. I want you to think with me about some common slogans. If we take them literally, we'd all be hopeless people.

- 1) "It's the real thing" – Coke
- 2) "The ultimate driving machine" – BMW
- 3) "Breakfast of champions" – Wheaties
- 4) "Have you had your break today?" – McDonald's

Think about these advertising slogans. "It's the real thing?" Really? Nothing compares to drinking a Coke? What happens to the ultimate driving machine if the ultimate driving machine's engineers are trying to make a more ultimate driving machine? What happens when the ultimate driving machines rusts or gets a scrape in the Meijer parking lot? I don't know about you, but I used to eat Wheaties and I don't come close to being a Michael Jordan. How about "deserving" a break today? It seems that we may have had one too many and now we need a slogan that says, "Think before you eat!" But then there are simply so many advertisements that simply try to say they're the best! And, we tend to believe them. We then tell others that because that organization said they're the best, they must be the best. I'm looking forward to the day when some company says, "We're not the best, but we're not awful." We need that kind of honest advertising.

Okay, but what does a fig tree have to do with any of this? On the outset, we need to understand the context. Jesus is headed back to Jerusalem after triumphantly entering Jerusalem as its King. On His walk, Jesus is hungry. He wants satisfaction with some food. He looks and sees a fig tree with leaves on it. Fig trees usually have fruit about the same time or a little after their leaves are blossoming. While fig

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Mk 11:12–14.

trees usually don't produce ripe fruit until the month of June, it would not be unheard of for there to be green, bitter figs on the tree at this point in time. Yet, Jesus does not find any fruit on this tree. There is some false advertising going on.

As a result, Jesus curses the tree in the hearing of the disciples. In sum, Jesus is hungry, looks for satisfaction from a tree that has some false advertising of fruit. Hence, Jesus curses the tree for its deception and fruitlessness.

But, how does this play into the idea that the Messiah came to free us to worship God through a relationship of dependence on the Lord. Well, we have to go to the Temple to understand.

¹⁵ And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. ¹⁶ And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. ¹⁷ And he was teaching them and saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers." ¹⁸ And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching. ¹⁹ And when evening came they went out of the city. ²

Understanding the Temple Incident

Jesus walks into the city of Jerusalem and then he returns to the temple. What He sees is appalling. He sees greed, ease and hypocrisy. All of this buying and selling took place in the Court of the Gentiles. The court of the Gentiles came about as a result of a passage like Isaiah 56. In that passage, we read about foreigners coming to worship God! It was always God's intent that through Abraham's seed the nations of the world would be blessed. So, we read in Isaiah 56:6-7: ⁶ **"And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant— ⁷ these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."** ³

Isaiah was prophesying that the eunuchs and the foreigner could enter into His presence. Many Jewish people also believed this to be the case. Judaism wasn't only for the Jew. There were proselytes, and in the temple there was a Gentile Court that was made specifically for the people born outside of the Jewish traditions. But, at the time of Jesus, the purpose of the Gentile court was ignored. People were buying and selling in this place. And, instead of people having to bring their animals from far distances to make a sacrifice, they could simply buy a kosher one from the temple itself. The people who sold in the temple were probably either from the High-Priestly hierarchy or they paid a large fee to the authorities

² [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Mk 11:15–19.

³ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Is 56:6–7.

so that they could sell there. As a result, the High Priest's family benefitted monetarily from this practice. One practice that took place was the temple's currency exchange. For the annual temple tax, the people needed to exchange their money for the half shekel tax. The exchange fee was as high as 10-12%. While Mark has already mentioned the buying and selling of animals and other sacrifices, he highlights the chairs of those who sold doves. I think he does this in order to highlight the profiteering off of the poor. In addition, Mark mentions people carrying goods through the temple to other places in Jerusalem. For ease and commerce's sake, it was the quickest way to get from point A to point B.

So, what's the point Mark is making here? Growing up I remember hearing friends of mine say that their church wouldn't allow the sale of any item in their church due to this passage. I thought it was, on the surface, a convincing argument. However, if you study this passage a little more, you begin to see that this passage does not speak out against selling. The religious establishment is using religion in order to pad their pockets. And, in doing so, they're oppressing the Gentiles and the poor. They're keeping them at arm's length from God.

So, the point isn't that sin exists in selling things. The point is that sin is in the hearts of the people! Mark states that sin existed in "those who bought and sold", in "the money changers", in "those who sold doves", and the "anyone's" who carried goods through the temple.

Jesus comes into the temple and doesn't merely confront a practice. He confronts the people. And the greatest horror that everyone needs to see is that the sin keeps the Jews and Gentiles from worshipping God. This is emphasized by Jesus in verse 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'."**

These words come from two different Old Testament passages. In Isaiah 56:7, we found that God's intent is that all nations would come to worship Him. It seems as though the distinguishing characteristic of true worship is a lifestyle of prayer. But, what was taking place in the Gentile Court? Were there Gentiles there? Maybe. If they were there, were they able to focus their hearts in prayer – offering their worship to the Lord? Absolutely not. There was too much commerce taking place. Earlier in verse 7, God promises to make them joyful in His house of prayer. Would there be joy amongst the Gentiles if they're being charged exorbitant amounts of money in order to worship? Never. They're set up for failure because all the odds are stacked against them.

When we look at this, we realize that the leaders of the Temple didn't care about the worship of God. They cared about themselves. They didn't care about people finding satisfaction in God. They cared about finding satisfaction in their own power, control and money. It's not hard to find similar situations in our own society of dirty politicians or people within corporations who are skimming money off the top for themselves. Other people might work to see other individuals fail in their jobs so that they can succeed and climb up the ladder. But within the Temple, the sin is greater. We're talking about the Temple which is to represent to the people the God who hears and saves. And, within the temple, the religious leaders are communicating that God doesn't care about them. God won't listen. God is a tool in our hands. The Gentiles had been offered to worship God, but they were kept from it. Being able to have focused worship in a temple with that much traffic and noise is like trying to sleep in the middle of a busy intersection.

Therefore, we see that **a house of prayer is a place encouraging the genuine worship of God.** Jesus is angry that His people don't allow for true, authentic worship of God. Not only that, they didn't want to worship God. They wanted to elevate themselves. So, it's not the selling that's a sin. It's the people's

greedy and unloving hearts that Jesus is addressing. No prayer is taking place. Therefore, there's no worship.

By the way, that's a powerful assumption that's being made here. Prayer is related to worship. Even within our local church contexts, we can seem busy, going from one Sunday School class to another and then talking with people along the way; but do we desire him? Is our goal in gathering to know God and make him known? Do we communicate our absolute dependence on God? Do we encourage each other to *go to the Lord* in prayer? Do we encourage one another in our gatherings to worship God or do we hinder people from seeing and savoring Christ? I have seen how God has been at work in our midst to grow us in Christ, and I pray that we would continue in this – loving all people with the gospel – the poor, the different ethnicities and the wealthy, too! All need to know God.

As a result of the hypocrisy, Jesus then quotes from **Jeremiah 7:11**. The way in which the message of this verse is taught by Jesus is similar to the way in which Jeremiah preached it. Jeremiah was at the gates of the temple. Jesus initially stood at the entrance of the temple, but then He came back and proclaimed that they were no different than they were in Jeremiah's day. This passage is extremely convicting and sobering. Jeremiah accuses the people of several sins. Here are two main sins mentioned.

The first is ritualism – trusting in the temple (not God) for their well-being. In verse 4, we see that the people ran to the temple as some excuse that they could hold on to in order to guarantee that they were “good” with God. This seems to be a similar mindset with many of the Pharisees that Jesus talked to. This also seems to be a similar attitude with people in a city like Holland. You may even have this attitude. I hope not, but maybe you do. You go to the church and think that you're all good as long as you get your weekly nugget. Maybe you write a verse down. Maybe you take notes. Maybe you even sing. But, the question you must ask yourself is, “Are you trusting in those things to ensure that you are right with God?” Are you ritualistically going to meet with the church? Is this what you're going to say to God at the judgment: “I went to church every week! I was faithful – unlike some other people. I know I'm a sinner, but I asked for forgiveness, so I'm good. . . .” Jeremiah and Jesus say that answer is not sufficient. Your trust should never be in your actions or even your confession or in any building. Your trust must be in the Lord!

The second sin addressed is injustice – the people were not truly concerned about the well-being of others. They were more concerned about their selfish desires than interpersonal relationships. This is key to note since the book of Mark emphasizes Jesus' teaching on the second table of the Law (focusing on interpersonal relationships). In Jeremiah's day there was theft, murder, adultery, false oaths, the worshipping of false gods and oppression of people who needed the most help (the fatherless, widows and strangers). And, guess what it was like in Jesus' day? There was practical theft and oppression within the temple through the taxes and also taking away the Gentiles right of worship. Soon after this incident there was an actual murder that took place. Most religious leaders in that day had a very lax view of marriage – stating you could divorce your wife for practically any reason. And, Jesus condemns the people for not letting their yes be yes and their no be no.

What about today? How has the so-called church failed in truly caring for those in need? What about adultery and sexual promiscuity? What about the idolatry of power or money? But if these exist in many churches in America without being addressed, the greatest problem is a heart problem. The people don't really worship God! Ventura, the American church, in many ways, has merely mimicked the traditional religious people throughout the ages! I don't think I'm going too far to say that this when

I wonder how people would view Jesus if he entered our churches today. Oh, may we recognize our need for Jesus to rescue us, cleanse us and also free us to worship God! And, if Jesus has shown you that, grow in repentance. Grow in turning to him in your need.

Now, looking back at the Temple incident and hearing Jesus' words, we see these two significant sin issues. Jeremiah then goes on to explain that these people merely mask their sin in the temple. They think the temple hides their sinful hearts, but God sees that the temple has simply become a den of robbers. Therefore, Jesus takes Jeremiah's words and applies it to the people in the temple in Mark 11. They are robbers. They're thieves, and the temple can't hide it. It's blatantly clear that they are sinners in saint's clothing. Therefore, putting together these two passages, Jesus is making it clear that the temple is to have true worship from people of all nations and that the people must be cleansed by God. Neither of these statements is true of the religious leadership and the overall temple practices when Jesus visits it.

Can you imagine the rage that must have filled the veins of the chief priests and scribes? Verse 18 goes on to say, "¹⁸ And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching."⁴ Jesus, who was the Purifier of the temple begins to purify the temple, but the very people who are supposed to proclaim the glory of God are the ones seeking to destroy God Himself! They do this because there are people who are astonished at Jesus' teaching. This word is used many times with regards to Jesus' teaching and miracles. It's used of the disciples when Jesus walks on water. Jesus' teaching was spectacular. It was something that gained people's attention. Obviously He was an amazing teacher for people to listen to him all day without food. But, even His smaller sermons demanded respect. But, the chief priests and the scribes hated Him for it. His teaching (His words) were drawing people away from them and displaying His authority. There were people who heard the voice of their Shepherd and they were following Him. Here we see how Jesus' design all along was for true worship. And those who worship God must come through Jesus. Be astonished with him. Then trust him to rescue you of your sin, and you'll be free to worship God! But there's more to worship.

Understanding the Fig Tree's Lesson

Towards the beginning of this message I said that I wanted to reveal to you that this passage taught that the Messiah came to free us to worship God, living in a relationship of dependence on the Lord. Up to this point, I really have only shown how this passage teaches one of these truths – that God must be worshipped. Up to this point, I think Jesus has done the same.

A while back, I was looking at an article on the internet, and this article was about a Chinese man who learned how to photoshop old pictures. He's become highly respected for his work and he has generously fixed over 2,000 photos for area residents. What he has done with these photos are amazing. But, he could have never been able to create the finished work without the original – even though the original is unclear. In the same way, what we've done up to this point is absolutely vital in unlocking the all-encompassing beauty of what Jesus came to accomplish as the Triumphant King! In just a few moments, I hope the Scriptures will open up our minds so that we might be able to see these two truths of worship and living by faith with brilliance (and hopefully we'll add color, too)! In all actuality, faith enables us to truly reverence God in the way He calls us to follow after Him.

⁴ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Mk 11:18.

In verses 20-21, we read: ²⁰ As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. ²¹ And Peter remembered and said to him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered.”⁵ The disciples saw that the fig tree had completely deteriorated, and Jesus utilizes this time as a teaching moment for His disciples. Jesus said, “Have faith in God. ²³ Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. ²⁴ Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. ²⁵ And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”⁶

What Jesus shows us here is that if Jesus has set us free as the Triumphant King, then we are set free to worship God. But what does that mean? What does that look like? Well, the true worship of God, leads to a relationship of dependence on God. And, in our daily lives it’s revealed in several things that Jesus brings out in this text. The first is:

True faith. What does all this mean? Could faith really be the application of the fig tree? At first glance, and even in looking at the passages in the Old Testament, I think the evidence points to judgment being the application of the fig tree. In large part that is correct, but in the face of judgment, Jesus says that people should seek God’s mercy. However, this is not our natural inclination, is it? When someone is being tracked down by the police, they will naturally run. When Adam and Eve sinned, they hid and tried to camouflage themselves with fig leaves. Jesus reveals that God is not only the King, but He is also the Priest who will cleanse us. While we deserve to be punished for treason, we can be forgiven. Jesus is clear, if you don’t want to wither like the fig tree and pass away in time, have faith in God. And, this means to put your entire self into God. It implies being defined by Him and having Him be your shelter and strength. It clearly points to not trusting in anything else for your satisfaction, but to Him alone for life. But, as I’ve even stated recently, faith is a relational term. Faith isn’t something we use in order to strongarm God to give us what we want. Faith is the activity of the soul that depends on the Lord because the Lord himself is our satisfaction! This is what the Triumphant King Jesus gives! So, he says, “have faith in God.” The Triumphant King also grants:

Faith overpowering mountains. Now, the next sentence is even trickier on face value. Some commentators have decided to basically say that Jesus is now changing the subject and commenting on the subject of faith, but I personally don’t believe Jesus went off topic here – although I used to believe that was the case. I used to say that this passage taught that if we have faith, we can go against insurmountable odds. While that is true, that is not *all* Jesus is saying.

As we have seen, Jesus has gone from Jerusalem to Bethany to Jerusalem to Bethany and now heading back to Jerusalem. As they are walking by the fig tree, they’re looking towards Jerusalem. We already know that God’s judgment is on Israel, but what about the temple? Why does Jesus say “this mountain”? To what mountain is Jesus referring? If you look back to the Isaiah passage that Jesus quotes from, you see the following: verse 5, “I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters”; verse 7 says, “these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer.” Two times, God says that He’s going to give these people

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Mk 11:20–21.

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Mk 11:22–25.

something, and one of these references is to a mountain where there is prayer! When we get to Jesus' time, we find that the temple mount neither has much true prayer taking place nor does it really honor the place for the Gentiles to worship. Did you hear that? The temple *mount*. Therefore, I believe Jesus is saying, "If you want to escape judgment, have faith in God. And, that type of faith will overcome the greatest of obstacles – the ritualistic pharisaical approach to God." This sentence seems to parallel the passages when Jesus pronounces the destruction of the temple. God's presence is not to be associated with this temple. People's attention need to turn away from that and back on to God.

Prayer flowing from true faith. So, what happens when people turn to God? When there is true faith, there is true prayer. A prayer that can ask and know they'll receive from God.

Now, some people will take this line out of context and say, "Jesus said that I can get whatever I want. I don't have whatever I asked for; therefore, Jesus is a liar." But, Jesus has already addressed what true prayers are and that you must have faith in God in order for those prayers to be truly answered. Therefore, a vain prayer for a Ferrari probably won't be answered. But, as you are increasingly being defined and developed by God and your desires are being shaped by His desires, your requests increasingly become more faith-filled and more desirous for His will – hence what we ask for grows to become more and more of what He desires. Don't use this as a selfish motivator. Use this command as a means to grow in your faith and love for the Savior. Because He has forgiven you, seek Him more and more!

Look at the context. Most people will agree that "believe that you have received it," cannot mean that if I believe I'm going to get a billion dollars, then I'm going to receive it. No matter what strand of theology you hold to, most (if not all) probably recognize there has to be context to these words. So, what is the context? In this passage, Jesus is saying to the disciples that the gospel (which they don't fully understand yet) is going to prevail over the world's way of doing things.

There is a seemingly insurmountable challenge of seeing people repent and believe on Jesus. People, even religious ones, don't want to have faith in God! Yet, the gospel does prevail. This should give us unbelievable encouragement in our prayers. The greatest miracle is seeing someone actually decide to be defined by Christ and love God with their entire being! Therefore, in your prayers, are you pleading with God for the salvation of those around you? When you look around you, do you see hypocritical religiosity? Or, do you see people who simply want the feelings or experiences that are positive, but they don't really want God?

The Bible said that we will do greater things than even Christ did when he was on the earth in the flesh. And, in context, that is talking about evangelism! That's talking about spreading the message of Jesus' death for sinners and seeing how the Spirit opens eyes for people to actually love and follow God! That's what this passage is saying, too. Jesus has the power to defeat that faithless pharisaism. Do you believe that? When you come into contact with friends, family members and co-workers who don't deeply love Jesus, are you praying for God's grace to overcome the mountain? Pray! And don't doubt that God will overcome. By the way, this doesn't mean that everyone will come to trust Jesus in the end. But this does mean that Jesus wins and there is real restoration – and real people really have been and will be rescued by the Triumphant King Jesus. Someday, Jesus will return and bring a greater Kingdom that will never perish, and a New Jerusalem where we will worship him perfectly! Until then, let's pray for his glory to be made known in our lives and that others will be awakened to glory in him, too!

But now, there's one more blessing that the Triumphant King gives:

Forgiveness because of God's forgiveness. And, this brings me to the final point. If one of Jesus' goal is to someday bring about the worship of every nation, tribe and tongue, that means the Judge must forgive us because we are all hypocrites apart from Christ. And, those who have been forgiven must forgive! If we realize the depth of our treason and the worthiness of punishment, and if we really understand the horrors of Christ's death in our place, then we will want to display real love towards other and seek to forgive them. Recently, I had a conversation with one of my children about Jesus' death and it shocked him. He later told me how affected he was emotionally by it. And then he told me that he later cried out to God and simply said, "Thank you for loving me that much!" When we're gripped by the forgiveness God gives through Jesus, then that affects how we relate to others.

Sadly, we many times get caught in a trap of unforgiveness. But, that's inexcusable. Jesus says that when we're praying for God's will to be done on earth – the growth of His Kingdom people – we cannot be harboring bitterness towards others and an unforgiving spirit since that is hypocritical of God's mission! Jesus is clear, if you don't forgive others, you are not forgiven. So, how must a forgiven person live? By forgiving others.

Now, let's go back to the beginning of Mark 11. Jesus walks into the city as the triumphal King. Jesus then shows us what the King is going to do first. He evaluates the temple and cleanses it. He uses the cursing of the fig tree to illustrate the false advertising of Israel – indicating fruit but having none. He shows the people they do not truly worship God, and their lives reveal they do not live in dependence on him and love for others. So, Jesus reveals to people what true worship must look like and declares that people of all nations must worship Him. How will people of all nations worship Him? Jesus then describes that people must have faith in God, live a life of prayer and forgiveness, believing that God is working through their faith for His Kingdom purposes.

The scope of Jesus' mission is much greater, broader and stronger than the Israelites admitted. And, I hope you see it, too. Anyone in here who has faith in the Lord is a part of this mission. Believers, grasp the gravity of this text and grasp the beauty of God in using us for eternal purposes. I believe this passage calls us to continual repentance, continual faith and a growing love for our neighbor – all the while realizing that everything rests on God and His forgiving, saving grace! Because we know what has happened, is happening and will happen after this, we can be confident that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Jesus died and rose again so that people can be forgiven and so that people can experience eternal life today. He truly is the triumphant King who entered Jerusalem.

So, those of us who trust Jesus, live by faith in our King who died and rose again and reigns! Live by faith. And love others with the gospel message, urging them to trust Jesus and love God. All the while, may it be our prayer, "Jesus, by faith, cast the mountain of false religion into the sea!"