

Good morning, church family. It is such an encouragement. Turn to Mark chapter 11. While you're doing that, it's such an encouragement to hear the voices of the saints lift up praises to the King together. That was so encouraging. Mark chapter 11. we're going to be in verses 12 through 26. Today, Mark chapter 11:12 through 26. The title of the message is the object of faith, the object of faith. And We're going to tackle a little bit larger portion of the text here this morning. It all goes together and I'll explain more about it. But once you found it, Mark chapter 11, please rise with me in honor of the one who gave us this word as we read our text this morning. Mark chapter 11, beginning in verse 12. And on the next day, when they had left Bethany, he became hungry. And seeing at a distance a fig tree that had leaves, he went to see it, perhaps he would find anything on it. And when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. And he answered and said to it, may no one ever eat fruit from you again. And his disciples were listening. Then they came to Jerusalem, and he entered the temple, and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of those who were selling doves. And he was not permitting anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. And he began to teach and say 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 robber's den. And the chief priests and the scribes heard this and began seeking how to destroy him, for they were afraid of him, for the whole crowd was astonished at his teaching. And when evening came, they were going out of the city. And as they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. And being reminded, Peter said to him, Rabbi, look, the fig tree which you have cursed has withered. And Jesus answered and said to them, have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, be taken up and cast into the sea and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that for believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. For this reason I say to you all things for which you pray and ask believe that you have received them and they will be granted to you. And whenever you stand praying forgive if you have anything against anyone so that your father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. But if you do not forgive neither will your father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions. This is the word of the Lord. Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we are so thankful to be gathered here this morning. We are so thankful for the edification of the body that you have allowed us to sing your praises together as one body. It was such an encouragement to me and I pray it was an encouragement for those here as well. We pray, Lord, that you would, through the text today, speak into our hearts through your spirit, that we would take the application, take the truths of this passage, apply them to our lives and carry them forward. We pray, Lord, that you would glorify yourself this morning in this congregation gathering together. I pray Lord that you would remove any hindrances for me that you would remove any slips of the tongue or tongue ties

or distractions, Lord, I pray that you would simply use me as a vessel for I am utterly dependent upon you. We pray all these things Lord in your holy name. Amen. All right, you can be seated. So Mark chapter 11, we're making good headway into Mark. We're a little over three fourths of the way through, a little over two thirds of the way through, I should say. And looking at chapter 11 today, we're going to discuss Jesus beginning his work in the temple. If you recall last week, we saw Jesus enter Jerusalem. We saw him come in as the Messiah. We've been trekking with him and the disciples for several chapters now on their way to Jerusalem. Arrived there. He entered the temple at the end of our text last week took a look around It was late in the evening and he went to rest and so we're gonna be picking up Right after they rested the very next day now in normal Markian fashion, we're going to see him use the sandwich method. I know we've talked about that before but just as a refresher there's often times that mark will come into a text and and he will write in a sandwich method. So in other words, he begins with a story has another story in between finishes the first story at the end. So it's an ABA format. So he gives a story with a story contained in the middle. So think of it like A's are Bread on the sandwich bees the meat in the middle and if you don't take the text as a whole All three parts and understand them together. You won't interpret the text correctly. So you have to take all of them together To have the the meat and understanding what the meat says in the middle part B. You have to understand a together And so that's why we're taking such a larger chunk of a text together so that we can understand fully What mark is trying to communicate here? So when we think about this three part method, we're going to see the beginning story here is going to start with the fig tree. Now, whenever you think about the fig tree, this is actually a very contentious text. This is the only negative what they consider negative or judgmental or judgment miracle in all of the Gospels where it's a curse as part of the miracle that he's doing. In fact, the other Gospel writers do not handle it entirely the same way. Matthew separates the sandwich out and he gives the temple first and the fig tree second. Luke actually omits Excuse me, Luke actually records a parable that Jesus taught in Luke 9 about the same situation. So it's the same idea It's not played out physically and what he was doing But it's a parable of the same type and then Joe John completely omits the fig tree altogether and has the cleansing of the temple in chapter 2 of his gospel beginning very very close to the front. And so as a firm believer in the mark and priority, which means the that Mark wrote his gospel first and the other gospel writers use it as a source. It would seem that Mark had right from Peter the stories here exactly how it happened in the other gospel writers through obviously inspiration of the spirit wrote it in a slightly different way or a minute altogether. This text is very difficult to deal with. In fact, Well, world-renowned atheist Bertrand Russell, if you've ever heard of him before, actually points to this miracle as one of the reasons why he is an atheist. He says that anyone that would look to Christ as having

honor and valor and being a good person, and yet has this text in the Bible, he is quoted as saying there are other people throughout history that has more virtue in Christ than Christ because of this particular text. So this text is extremely contentious and difficult to deal with. So we're going to take it little by little. But ultimately, what we're going to see is that the curses today is actually against the unfruitful temple and its religious leaders who have made the temple a den of thieves. And we're going to see that the applications here are going to be extremely pertinent to us today. Now, those of you who are familiar with how I normally do my sermon structure, there's a point and then an application for each point. Because this text is to be taken as a whole in the three parts, we'll do the entire text first and have several points of application at the end in about three and a half hours. No, I'm just kidding. Not quite that long. But we will get digging in here to this extremely dense text, and we'll get through this by God's grace. So number one, the unfruitful, cursed, the unfruitful, cursed, verses 12 through 14. So let's reread that to refresh our memory. Mark chapter 11, verse 12. And on the next day, when they had left Bethany, he became hungry. And seeing at a distance a fig tree that had leaves, he went to see if perhaps he would find anything on it. And when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. And he answered and said to it, may no one ever eat fruit from you again. And his disciples were listening. So coming off of last week's text, of course understanding it in context. They've rested in Bethany. It's the next day Mark very seldom gives us extra details, but he does here for the timeline. So it's the very next morning they spent the night in Bethany and they're on their way back to Jerusalem. This is about a 15 stadia walk, which is roughly about two miles, just over two miles in our mind, our terms. So they're walking from Bethany for about the two mile journey and the Mount of Olives is what they have to travel through, which is a known area for olive trees, fig trees, fruit bearing a little mount there. And as they're walking, of course, we see that Jesus is hungry. And so he sees a fig tree. Now it's very important to understand the season that we're in for figs to understand the context of this curse. The fig trees only have leaves during times that their fruit is growing. The harvest is usually early fall, this would be late fall as the leaves have begun to come back. And then there's a process where the figs begin to grow, and they're called pagum, P-A-G-G-I-M. So when before they were the full fig, they're in pagum form, and they grow over several months and they mature just like any other fruit tree would. But as they're growing, they're actually edible most fruits that we would, you know, we would have, you know, there's some fruits that you as they're growing, you can't eat them and those kinds of things. But the long story short, and in me explaining that is, if they that the tree has leaves is expected for it to have some form of fruit. In other words, you can't have leaves and there not be pagum on it. As soon as the leaves bloom, that's the triggered by the pagum beginning to mature. That's where there's an

expectation of some sort of fruit. And it was culturally normal. The locals would have eaten pagum before the figs were completely ripe if they were hungry. This action by Jesus is completely normal and expected. And we know that because Mark specifically notes that there were leaves. So he turns aside looking at a tree that was culturally normal, it was completely expected for it to have some sort of a fruit. It was created as a fruit bearing tree. So there's a tree here that's expected to be bearing fruit in a fertile area, a place that's known to have a large crop of figs and olives every year. And so he turns aside to see it. And there's nothing there. And Mark makes a note here, and this is where a lot of people get very frustrated for it was not the season for figs. Now, the original language here is doesn't read as we would think of, it's not a way to exempt the tree that it shouldn't have been bearing fruit, because you have an understanding culturally in the way that tree grows, if there's leaves, there's expected to be some sort of fruit. In the original language there, that would be worded as there was, there was no figs, but there was expected to be paga. In other words, there's the context of the way the original language is written. It's understood that there should have been something on the tree because there's leaves. Does that make sense? Because that little phrase, it was not the season for figs is what honestly gives so many people consternation. Well, how would he curse this poor, innocent tree who wasn't even supposed to be producing fruit? Why did he expect it to have fruit if it wasn't the season for figs? Do you see where that argument would come from? But understanding the context of how fig trees grow, the fruit that was expected, culturally, they were absolutely going to, it was completely normal process. And so Jesus goes to find fruit from something he created to bear fruit. And you're gonna hear me use that phrase a lot, created to bear fruit. And there was nothing there. So ultimately, as we see, he curses the tree, because it didn't bear fruit. And he says, may no one eat fruit from you again. And his disciples were listening. Now I want us to understand the key here of the fruit tree, the context of why the fig tree, specifically figs, is so compelling. In Old Testament, in the Old Testament, figs are assigned over and over from multiple different Old Testament prophets as a sign of God's judgment. Isaiah uses that Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, Micah, all use fig under God's providence, the words that he gave them to describe judgment. And so the fact that it's a fig tree is not just a side note. This is central to understanding the context of this passage as a whole, for we see him now casting judgment or we will see him in just a moment, casting judgment upon the temple and its rulers as well. And the fig tree plays an integral part in the understanding what he's doing and what he's saying. And so when we think about the fig tree and the judgment that it's symbolizing, Jesus is enacting a parable here for us to understand. Now let's think about this again. For those who have contention with this passage in saying a poor innocent tree was cursed, does the creator not have the right to do with his creation as he sees fit? We cannot in any way, shape or form cast

judgment upon the creator for doing what he wills with his creation. So there is no way that any of us can cast a negative shadow on Christ here who is using a tree to simply teach a valuable lesson to both the disciples and us. It's been said the leafy fig tree with all its promise of fruit is as deceptive as the temple, which despite its religious commerce and activity, is really an outlaws hideout. So I want you to get that framework in your mind the fig tree representing the temple. So point number one, the unfruitful cursed point number two, the unfruitful cleansed. So we've got the idea of the fig tree, the unfruitful fig tree received the curse. And now he's going into the unfruitful temple. and he's going to cleanse it. Verses 15 through 18, let's refresh our memory there. Then they came to Jerusalem and he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple and overturn the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. And he was not permitting anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. And he began to teach and say 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 robber's den. And the chief priests and the scribes heard this and began seeking how to destroy him. For they were afraid of him for the whole crowd was astonished at his teaching. So now we've discussed a the top slice of the bread, right? We talked about the sandwich method. So we've talked about the top slice of the bread, he's began his story. And now he's switching to the meat of the sandwich. Now we're in part B, the ABA setup. And so now that we're in the central part of this sandwich, we see them arriving in Jerusalem. And immediately he enters the temple once again now where he would have been entering coming in from the side of Jerusalem that he was coming in on especially since he was entering the marketplace section of the temple is going to be the court of the Gentiles. If you ever heard maybe of the different courts that were in Herod's temple in those days, but the court of the Gentiles that's where all the merchants were. So that was where the Gentiles were allowed to enter. It was Much larger than maybe I know many of us may have been raised in the church where you've seen little felt Graphics of I grew up on felt graphics You guys remember those felt things where they told the stories or that you saw seen the little pictures and it looks like a tiny space, right? He flips over two or three tables and the little pictures that you've seen he goes on know the court of the Gentiles is 500 yards long by 325 yards wide roughly 35 acres of space a massive courtyard. And the courtyard is surrounded by these columns that were so massive, so intense that it took three fully grown men holding hands around it to encircle the base of the column. So you can imagine a column that that has that big. of a circumference. And so this massive area holding up these huge porticoes that were ornately carved wood stone everywhere, just this massive 35 acre market. And so when he goes into it, Scripture tells us that he begins to drive out those who are buying and selling in the temple. Now, the normal common practice of the temple in those days is, if you recall the temple sacrifices that were commanded by

God in Exodus, you were to bring an animal for the particular sin that needed to be sacrificed for, you were to bring it to, at that time the tabernacle would eventually become the temple, and you were to sacrifice your animal without blemish, and it was common practice in that day, and keeping in mind that the overwhelming rise of merchants only happened in the first century, the temple hadn't been used for quite such excessive money laundering, for lack of a better term. In that particular context until recently, close to Jesus' life. So we have this huge spread of all these things. Herod had built this temple as a testament to his grandiose nature, as a gift to the Jews to keep them happy. And it took years and years to build, but they would bring these animals to the temple. And upon entering the temple and going through the court of the Gentiles to enter the other areas where only Jews were allowed to go, these money changers would begin to get in the habit of telling people through the leadership of the Sanhedrin who led the temple that their sacrifices that they were bringing simply weren't good enough. Oh, that dove, see that feather out of place? That's not quite good enough. And so they would tell them, but my animals are good enough. And so they would have to be forced to buy an animal on premises, or they would bring the Hebrew money that they would be able to spend. And because Herod built the temple and then the Romans were technically in charge of Jerusalem, they would say, Oh, you can't do commerce with your Hebrew coin, you have to interchange it with Roman coin. And then they would get robbed, essentially, for exchanging their money at very high rates of not good exchange rate, thank you, not good exchange rate. And so we see this becoming a way of simply making money. So I want us to understand the context of what was happening here. Jesus came into a temple that had been laid down by God the Father, centuries before this, that was created to bear fruit, and we'll talk about that in just a few moments, but was created for a specific reason, to bear a specific kind of fruit, and he arrives and sees that it's bearing nothing but robbery, and financial gain for the leaders of the temple. Of course, the leaders of the temple allowing all this to go on, there was likely cuts coming up to them, right? Payments coming to the religious leaders, money for the temple was funded by how much they could make off the animals they were reselling to people as they came in. And to give you an idea of the scale, Josephus, a first century Jewish historian records that on the Passover year of when the temple was completed that week, they sacrificed 255,600 lambs in one week. That's just the lambs. So I want us to understand the scale of what's occurring. And so Jesus comes in and begins to flip over tables, driving people out. Now, in our Western mindset, we think that this means he cleared out the entire place. It doesn't, there's no physical way for a single man to clear out 35 acres of merchants and flip over all their tables. We know that because of the sheer size of it. Not to mention, had he done that, the Romans would have interjected and they would have brought in a garrison and shut the whole thing down for all the turmoil that it was causing. But he made a big enough stink, he made

a big enough scene that the Sanhedrin, the leaders of the temple, heard about it. And so he's flipping over the tables, he's driving out the money changers, he's not permitting people to carry their cult practice physical things that they would have to carry through the courtyard of the Gentiles to get into their part. He's stopping as much of it as he can, he's making a point. And the point that he is making, he then tells us in verse 17. when he begins to teach and say, is it not written, my house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations, but you have made it a robber's den. So now that he's come to the point of teaching about what he's doing, he now calls on the authority of the word of God to argue and back up why he's doing what he's doing. But it's very significant that he quotes from Isaiah 56. Let me explain that significance in this way. So we've already talked about the huge, huge columns that were all the way around the court. On the opposite end of the court, where the inner sanctuary was, where the court of men was, the court of women was, where you would go into the inner parts of the sanctuary, where only Jews were allowed to travel, every column or every few feet, there was a sign, and it would read something to the effect of, only Jews can pass here, if you're a foreigner, If you're a Roman, if you're a Gentile, if you're a eunuch, you cannot pass these columns. And if you do, you're the one responsible for your own death. So the Jews had fenced everything within or excuse me, without on the outside of this courtyard, upon penalty of death. But what's interesting is that Isaiah 56, where Jesus is quoting from, is a passage where God tells us the reason that he gave the temple in the first place. And if you read Isaiah chapter 56 as a whole, and you understand that in that context of that chapter, God is actually teaching that his temple is for foreigners, exiles, eunuchs, and Gentiles. The four main groups that the Jews themselves wrote on the signs that were not allowed to enter the temple is exactly who God says in Isaiah 56, that the temple was written for, or built for, excuse me. And so Jesus tells them that he is clearing it for the nations. Isaiah 56, seven reads in full, even those I will bring to my holy mountain and make them glad in my house of prayer, their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on my altar for my house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples. And so God is saying in verse seven of Isaiah 56 that all the people of the nations, the people that are now the Jews rejecting in Jesus's time saying you cannot enter the temple was built for them and he would bring them to the holy mountain so that they too could come to him. And so the temple had a very specific purpose to bear fruit in the nations of God's glory, to be the access point to Yahweh for all nations. It was to be a house of prayer where even the sacrifices of foreigners would be accepted. So we see the temple built for a very specific reason and a very specific fruit to be produced. And Jesus couples in this particular quote here. He also quotes a portion of Jeremiah 7:11, which reads in full, has this house, which is called by my name, become a robber's den in your sight? Behold, I, even I have seen it, declares Yahweh. So Jesus brings two quotes, one showing

what the original purpose of the temple is, and then showing that God already knows what they have done with it, creating it a robber's den to show the judgment upon the temple and its rulers. But he's also making another statement here. Because we know in context of what is coming up in the life of Christ and what his true reason for being on the earth is, is that he is now rejecting what the Jews have made of the temple because he is now going to be the access to Yahweh. He is now going to be the one that draws the nations unto God. He's rejecting this cult practice of all these temple rituals that the Jews has skewed over the years as the temple leaders have made a mockery of what God has created here, where there's no fruit being born and for what it was originally created to be, so that he can now bring about the fruitful access to God which was his primary purpose. And so he's clearing out those who have made the temple unfruitful, gives them the reason why. and the Sanhedrin heard it. Now the Sanhedrin, just to make sure we're all on the same page, is comprised of chief priests, scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees that would rule over the temple. They were the ones that made the decisions on how the temple was ran, what would happen in it, what handled the festivals and all the things that would happen there. And so the Sanhedrin heard it, he made a big enough scene that they heard it, and they also heard his teaching. And it's very interesting the wording that is given in verse 18. The chief priests and the scribes heard this and began seeking how to destroy him for they were afraid of him for the whole crowd was astonished at his teaching. Now notice what they're afraid of. Are they afraid of him tearing apart the temple? Or are they afraid of his impact on the crowds because the crowds are questioning their authority now? If you recall back in Mark chapter one, if you were with us when we began this expositional series through Mark, Mark chapter one in verse 22 holds the exact same phrasing. For Jesus arrived at a synagogue in Mark chapter one to open his ministry, if you will, in Mark's record. He went into a synagogue to teach and it says, and they were astonished at his teaching for he was teaching them as one having authority and not as the scribes. So the very first time that Christ teaches, they get the exact same reactions what they're teaching now, only this time, he's in the hornet's nest, if you will. He's at the center of Jewish cult practice. And when I say cult, I don't mean false, like cult, sacrificing chickens. Cult is another word you can use just for simple, repetitive religious practices. There's two meanings of that word. So make sure I'm on the same page with the right one, okay? So these cult practices, these religious repetitive practices that they were bringing about, that they have stained with the greed of men, Jesus has pushed back against it. And they're not concerned about the misuse of the temple. They're not concerned about him stopping their monetary gain. Their primary concern that they have is that they, that Jesus, excuse me, is pulling at the thin, frail thread of their authority. And this is now going to trigger and cascade through almost like a waterfall effect over the next several weeks, as we go through these next few chapters, continued aggression from the



religious leaders, because now they're seeking to destroy him. How dare this man from Nazareth, this no-name town, come and question our authority, And so Mark here, it's been said, portrays the clearing of the temple not as its restoration, but as its disillusion. Jesus is not clearing the temple to reinstate the temple, he's clearing the temple to say there's something better. This shadow, this foreshadow, excuse me, of what was to come, the Messiah, is no longer necessary because I am here. He is dissolving this practice of the Jews that drew away from God's true purpose, which was to draw the nations to himself. So he created this temple to bear fruit, and it is not bearing fruit, it needs to be dissolved. And we know ultimately this temple was completely destroyed by Rome in AD 70. And so when you look at this from a high perspective, you are from a little bit higher vantage point, you begin to see the doing away with of the religious practices of the Jews, because it's no longer necessary to bear fruit. Number three, the curse realized. So we've looked at the top layer of the sandwich, the top slice of bread, then we've looked at B, the meat, the middle part of the sandwich, and now we're gonna finish up the story, the bottom layer of bread that still goes with the tree. So the curse realized, verses 19 through 26. And when evening came, they were going out of the city, and as they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. And being reminded, Peter said to him, Rabbi, look, the fig tree which you cursed has withered. And Jesus answered and said to them, have faith in God. Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, be taken up and cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. believe that you have received that or excuse me for this reason I say to you all things for which you pray and ask believe that you have received them and they will be granted to you. And whenever you stand praying forgive if you have anything against anyone so that your father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. But if you do not forgive neither will your father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions. So now to finish up this Mark and sandwich. Mark comes back to the next day. So ultimately, he cleansed the temple spent a day there evening came, they went back the two miles to Bethany. And then the next morning, they were coming back the two miles to Jerusalem again. And as they were passing that same area, the same trail the same road, they see the fig tree and it's withered from the roots. from the roots. And I want us to make sure that we're really picking up on the wording there. It's withered from the roots. The root of Jewish practice was the temple. The root of that temple was the monetary gain that was made and the court of Gentiles. The temple could not function in all its grandeur the way that Herod set it up without having the money coming in to maintain thousands of priests. It literally took thousands of priests to maintain the function of the temple. And so the tree that Jesus uses as an example of not bearing fruit, not doing what it was created to do, has now withered overnight from the roots. It will never bear fruit again. Anybody in here ever trimmed a

tree back way far, like all the way down, but didn't mess with the roots and guess what happened? comes back. The only way to completely get rid of a plant is to pull it up by the roots or to decimate the roots or to remove it from the ground completely, whatever the case may be, whatever, whatever way you want to destroy a particular plant. And so we know this fig tree being withered from the roots is a clear sign, a clear enacted parable of Jesus clearing out the temple, going after the root of the false practice the Jews have made what God simply gave to foreshadow the need for the Messiah. And so they noticed this withering and Peter, remember Peter is likely the one who's giving Mark his information to write his gospel. So Peter is probably giving a firsthand and then I saw the tree. So Peter being reminded said to him, look the fig tree, which you cursed. has withered. So the symbology has come full circle, the fig tree that was supposed to bear fruit, and then the temple that was supposed to bear fruit, both of which got cursed for not bearing fruit. And we know eventually, ultimately, the temple is torn from its roots, and the entire sacrificial system withers away, because it's no longer needed. So do you see how having the sandwich together there and understanding the context of A's and then the B in the middle understands what Jesus is truly teaching through the enacted parable of the fig tree. So as they brought this to the attention of Jesus, He shifts gears a little bit and teaches them about faith, the object of faith. That's the title of our message, the object of faith, because the Jews had put the object of their faith, no longer in Yahweh, but in their practices. no longer the law of God for redemption, no longer in what God commanded the temple to be used for, but in their man made additions to the practices that he laid down. Because the point of the sacrificial system, the point of the law is to point forward to the Messiah. And now the true and better temple is here. And so Jesus says, don't have faith in that building. Don't have faith in those leaders. And he says right in verse 22, have faith in God. He is pushing back on what man has distorted. The gracious gift of God pointing towards his ultimate redemption in the Messiah, they twisted it, and they distorted it, and they made it ugly. It's the beautiful thing that God intended it to be, and he's cleansed that, he's dissolved that, and he says, no, no, have faith in God, the one that the temple represents, not the temple itself. And so he's bringing a clear picture back to them of where the object of their faith should be. It should never have been in law. It should never have been in tradition. It should never have been in manmade regulations. The object of their faith and ours is God and God alone. But he couples here an example. Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain be taken up and cast into the sea, as does not doubt it in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. Now, I want us to think here culturally of the context of what Jesus is teaching this. On the Mount of Olives, it's about 300 feet in sea level higher than Jerusalem. And if you're standing at the top of the Mount of Olives at that time, and you can still see it today, is the mountain that Herod built on the other

side of Jerusalem. You can see in the distance the peak of his great fortress, Herodian's Fortress. And on top of this mountain, Herod built and wanted something that could not be accessed by anyone or anything so that if something happened, a rebellion, an attack by an enemy, it could flee from Jerusalem, get to his fortress, and no one could access him. And so what he did to make this happen is he removed, literally by manpower, every mountain within a certain radius around his fortress. So the leader that built the temple, The Roman lords of that day moved mountains to build the grandiose things that he was attempting to build. Now think about the disciples who lived through that. who lived through the Romans, leading this and moving mountains to build what they wanted to build. And then the manpower that it took, and Jesus says, no, the object of your faith should be God, for that is the most powerful one that can move mountains. So when you understand the context of how the disciples would have understood that it makes a much bigger impact. This text does not mean as many people in the word of faith movement does not mean that if you simply conjure up your faith more and more, you can command mountains to move or never be sick or never have to suffer of any kind or you should always be wealthy and wise. This passage here is Jesus teaching that the object of their faith is God. And why would you not seek things from him? Why would you not pray to him? Why would you not trust him for he can move entire mountains and cast them into the sea. The more powerful one is who you should have your faith in. Not the leaders of the temple, not Rome, not Herod, not the traditions of men. You should be looking to the object of your faith, God and God alone. And so Jesus is correcting the disciples' faith as well. Remember the disciples were practicing Jews. They probably attended multiple festivals before Jesus pulled them from the side of the lake or from their particular jobs. to follow him, they likely had been in the temple multiple times and even participated in the practice of the temple leaders. And then as though they cannot be separated, he speaks about the object of faith and prayer. So he says have faith in God in verse 22. And then in verse 24, he immediately assumes that they would be praying. For this reason, I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them. Prayer and faith cannot be separated. Faith and prayer cannot be pulled apart. But nor can forgiveness. Verse 25, and whenever you stand praying, forgive if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. The fruit of the appropriate object of your faith is forgiveness. Forgiveness for you, for when you have faith in Yahweh, when you have faith in Christ alone, you are given forgiveness by His grace. And that fruit of forgiveness then plays itself out in our lives as we forgive those who have trespassed against us, as Jesus taught us in the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6. And so this entire passage is in the context of correcting rejecting, excuse me, rejecting the Jewish twisted cult practices that they have made it correcting the disciples poor object of faith and bringing them back to point to God alone as the object of their faith, and then showing

what the fruit actually should be. Do you see the theme of fruit throughout this text? the tree wasn't producing it, the temple wasn't producing it. And then he brings them back to show them have faith in God. And then he shows them exactly the fruit of that faith, in that the object of your correct faith being Yahweh, and your relationship with him, trust the one that can do anything. And then you see the fruit of forgiveness, as he continues to teach. It's a beautiful depiction of what our relationship with Christ is. because both right faith and prayer stand in perfect continuity with God in conformity to his will. Perfect continuity with God. And so now that we have a good grasp on this text, let us apply it. So we've worked, we've mined, I worked up a sweat mining it up here. It's hot in here, am I the only one? And so we've we've mined the truths of this, but we cannot fail to apply this to our lives. You can learn all these facts about the cool historical things about first century Judaism, and how the impact the disciples was at that time. But if it does not come home to roost, if you will, on your life, it is all meaningless is head knowledge. So let's apply this to our lives because there's valuable truths here. First application. God intends what he creates to function as he intended. He created the temple to be the light of himself to the nations. He makes that very clear in Isaiah 56, but it did not bear fruit. It did not bear fruit. Now, when we think about in our context of believers, we know that we are new creations in Christ. Paul tells us that over and over again, new creatures in Christ. and we are called to bear fruit. We were created as new creatures to bear fruit, to be the light to the nations. The temple is no longer needed. Christ indwells us. We are here and created as new creatures to bear fruit so that all nations will see God. And so I would challenge and encourage each one of us to ensure that we are bearing fruit, as Jesus commanded us to in John 15, five, when he says, I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from me, you can do nothing. Now hear me say this, we are to bear fruit, but it is not your work that does it, it is Christ's work in you. This is not a challenge to you to pull yourself up by your bootstraps and to add on six extra hours of Bible reading a day. This is a challenge to you to understand that we are called to bear fruit, we are created to bear fruit, and God intends what he creates to function as he intended it to function. And by his grace and mercy, he will work within you by the fruit of his spirit to bring that fruit about. And that's why it specifically says apart from me, you can do nothing. But believers, the Lord uses the priest word and his scriptures to call us to that fruit bearing, does he not? So I am by his grace calling us to bear fruit in keeping with repentance. Point number two, excuse me, application number two. Don't worry, we're not going back to point number two. Sorry. Application number two. And I hope this is already in your mind's eye. Jesus is the object of our faith. Jesus is the object of our faith. Not religious practices. not man made inventions. It is Christ. He is the true access to God, the true and better temple. He came to replace what man had tarnished and to give us full access to

God. And that is why in a few short chapters, we will see the veil of the temple torn asunder from top to bottom because by his sacrifice and atonement, we have full access to God. And so believer, I call to your remembrance that Christ is the object of our faith, not our own righteousness, not our own works. Christ is who we look to. The strong arms of our Savior that can carry us through when we pray and seek his will and we're aligned with scripture. And he moves mountains that we could never think to be moved. You get anyone in here had things in your life that you never thought possible. And then when you look back, maybe not in the storm, or in the midst of the movement of the mountain, you don't may not recognize it. But when you look back, you go there is no possible way I could be on this side of that without God himself. And the object of our faith is Christ in those times. And so I'm calling to your remembrance. Do not forget your first love. The object of our faith is not coming here every Sunday morning, although we should be gathering. The object of your faith is not how many hours you spend in reading God's word, although you should be reading God's word. The object of your faith is not how much money you give, although you should be tithing and giving to your church. That is not the point of our faith. The point of our faith is Christ and Christ alone. We must not forget that. And the last point of application for us is similar to the second one. Remember that you are saved by faith alone in Christ alone. It is not our faith plus anything else. It is not our faith in human rulers. It's that our faith in how many years you've been a member of a particular church, it's not who your favorite podcaster is or author is, your faith is in Christ alone. We're studying the Reformation on Wednesday nights, and I cannot wait to the development of the five solas, the Reformation, faith alone, in Christ alone. Two of the five solas. So I call to your remembrance that it is faith alone in Christ alone that justifies us. The temple was not necessary, it was simply a shadow. The law was to show us our need for Christ that we might put our whole faith alone in Christ alone. And my fourth application, prayer for us should be as breathing air. prayer for a believer should be as breathing air Spurgeon once was asked, What should I focus more on prayer or reading the scripture? And he said, Do you focus more on inhaling or exhaling? And his point being that reading scripture and prayer is as vital to the believer as air is to the human being. Pray, spend time in prayer with your father, the object of your faith, praying for repentance, praying for grace, praying for mercy, that we might then live out the forgiveness that we have been shown to those around us, beginning here in the body, or in your family first, here in the body, and then outside in the world around us, because they will know us by our love, and you cannot forgive without love. And so I would challenge all of us to be in constant prayer for the mercy and grace of the object of our faith to flow out through us and forgiveness to those around us. That has how a world has changed. So in conclusion, let us rejoice in the one who came to dissolve the skewed temple practices. I am so thankful that we no longer are tied to the shadow. but we see Christ and Christ alone and

we rest in his finished work. When he said it is finished on the cross and the temple was torn, that was it. The veil in the temple was torn, it was done. He's begun cleansing it even as we see in this text here. He is dissolving those failed practices and this should cause us to rejoice in him, to come to him with a greater attitude of prayer, a greater attitude of praise for his grace and his mercy. And then going forward, we're gonna continue to see him pushing back against the temple and its skewed practices. We're gonna see many altercations at the temple. He'll continue to chip away and dissolve the failed temple system, excuse me, and his corrupt leaders. For as we saw today, it did not bear the fruit that God intended it to bear. I pray this was an encouragement to you as it was to me this week to remind us that the object of our faith is Christ and Christ alone and that is in who we rest. Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we are so thankful for your grace and your mercy. We are so thankful for the text today that encourages us and brings our minds sharply back to you as the object of our faith, and that we are to bear fruit in keeping with being part of the vine that you have grafted us into. I pray, Lord, that we will not look to our own righteousness, but to you alone and that we will rest in your finished work. In your holy name, I pray. Amen.