

# The DAILY JESUS NEWS #251

## Tuesday... Day of Testing and Teaching

### Jesus Teaches About the Power of Praying in Faith MK 11.20-25 (Parallel Text: MT 21.20-22)

20 In the morning (on Tuesday), as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. 21 <sup>MT</sup>When the disciples saw this they were amazed. They asked, "How did the fig tree wither so quickly?"

<sup>M</sup>Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has permanently dried up!"

22 *"I command you all to continue to hold on to your faith in God," Jesus answered.*

23 <sup>MT</sup>*"I speak the truth--if you continue to have faith and do not doubt, not only will you do what was done to the fig tree, <sup>M</sup>but if anyone says to this mountain, 'I command you to go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart, but keeps on believing that what they say will really happen, it will certainly be done for them.*

24 *"Therefore I command: whatever you persist in asking for in prayer, keep on believing that you have received it, and it will be yours.*

25 *"And when you stand praying, if you are holding on to anything against anyone, I command you to forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you of your sins."*

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = <sup>MT</sup>, Mark = <sup>M</sup>, Luke = <sup>L</sup>, John = <sup>J</sup>, Acts = <sup>A</sup>. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

CONTEXT DIGEST	
Location	On the Road into Jerusalem From Bethany
Timeline	Early April (Month 39)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage VIII: Passion Week
	C. Tuesday: Day of Testing and Teaching
Title	1. Jesus Teaches About the Power of Praying in Faith

#### COMMENT:

As Day Three of Passion Week--Tuesday--dawned in Jerusalem, no one but Jesus knew that it was destined to be one of the three most prolific days of ministry of his life. It was a day of testing, and teaching like none other.

The Law prescribed that every animal sacrificed in worship had to be examined by a priest, and declared perfect--good enough to sacrifice to a holy, perfect God. This was also true of the Passover Lamb. Thus, Jesus underwent rigorous examination by the leadership of Israel on Tuesday of Passion Week. He was thoroughly examined, and no sin or error was found in him. On the contrary, Jesus blistered his examiners with wisdom, truth, composure, and teaching that unveiled their hypocrisy before the multitudes who looked on as he was tested.

The teaching of Jesus on this single day contains roughly 10% of everything the gospels tell us about the entire life of Jesus! It was a day to remember forever. The Holy Spirit made sure that the gospel writers did

that, so that we, too, can learn and marvel at the feet of Jesus as they did, through their combined witness. Let's do that.

The day began with a spectacular teaching by Jesus on prayer. It was an object lesson drawn from the instant withering of the fruitless fig tree the day before. As the disciples passed by the now dead tree on the way to Jerusalem in the growing light of dawn, they could not help observing that it had died from the inside, outward. They had never seen such a thing.

Jesus used this teachable moment to open up some crucial lessons on the nature of faith, and its role in prayer. We can only point these out now, leaving full study of the truths to your own pursuit.

First, we can see that Jesus considered prayer to be a thoroughly practical matter. His Father literally answered prayer, and therefore it was essentially a matter of asking and receiving specific things from God. Without question, Jesus taught that prayer was communion, or communicative fellowship with the Trinity. But when one peruses all of the three hundred plus verse of teaching in the gospels concerning prayer that lie fertile in the Scriptures, it is clear that Jesus was a realist: God's plan is to meet out our needs by answering prayer; to pray is to ask and receive.

We have seen in the DJN that Jesus lived his own life with prayer at the heart of his faith. He expected his disciples to do the same. Therefore he said here: *"I command you all to continue to hold on to your faith in God. Whatever you persist in asking for in prayer, keep on believing that you have received it, and it will be yours."*

Second, Jesus expected his disciples to exercise the same authority in prayer that he demonstrated by withering the fig tree. In other words, he bequeathed his own authority to his disciples, because of our association with him, even as his Father bequeathed his own name and authority to his Son. Authoritative prayer ought to be as routine to us as it was to Jesus.

Third, prayer without faith in God's answer is useless. Jesus commanded us to believe that God IS answering, not that he "will" answer. Jesus used an "in transit" approach to answered prayer. We are to believe that the answer is already granted to us, and that it is currently in the process of being delivered to us, ready to arrive any moment. "In transit" describes it well.

I regularly order books from Amazon. When I place the order and see the notice that it has been shipped, I do not doubt that the "in transit" items will certainly show up at my door. They are already mine, though they are not yet in my physical possession. That is how Jesus commanded us to believe in answered prayer. Believe you already have what you ask, and you shall have it.

Finally, like his "disciple's prayer" guideline for private prayer in MT 6.5-14, Jesus linked prayer to forgiveness. One of the most difficult things to believe is that we can truly forgive others. Unforgiveness can seem like a high mountain that must be moved. Jesus said that we must forgive everyone we have anything against, so that we can be forgiven.

The truth is that Jesus died on the cross to pay for the sins of the entire world; therefore I can be sure he also paid for mine. Because this is so, that cross purchased the forgiveness of those who have sinned against me, as surely as it purchased my own pardon. If I refuse to agree with God's forgiveness of others through the cross, I also refuse to agree with him concerning my own forgiveness.

Our personal pardon is irreversible linked to the forgiveness of the sins of others through Jesus' death. It was one sacrifice that covered all sin, or it covered none at all. This is the crucial link between our forgiveness of others, and our own forgiveness by God. Jesus already paid for it all. To deny this is to damn ourselves.

### APPLICATION:

According to Jesus, there is no reason why any one of us cannot become mighty in prayer. In fact, there is no excuse for a weak, wimpy prayer ministry.

We all have the same access to the Father through the Spirit that Jesus has. He has already purchased the answer to our prayers by his own perfect righteousness and standing before the Father, who answers our prayers for HIS sake. Every promise of the Old and New Covenants is now "yes" to each of us through the

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shed blood of the New Covenant. The only thing limiting our growth and power in prayer is our practice of it.

*On the basis of today's reading, will you rededicate yourself to persistence in growing in a life of prayer? Will this command of Jesus define the way you pray? When will you get started?*