

## Mark 11:1-19

### “Reality Versus Actuality”

For a number of years now “reality” shows have been the big thing in our country as far as television type entertainment goes. I don’t know if they still do but TV had a program called “The real world,” then they had the show that followed Ozzy Osborne and his family around, Hulk Hogan and his family around, we have John and Kate plus 8, other entertainment type reality programs like American Idol, the Amazing race, the Biggest Loser. There are paranormal reality shows where people put themselves in places whereby they’re trying to see if places are legitimately haunted. These kinds of shows have captured the American pop culture, people putting themselves in real situations with cameras there to record the event for everyone to see. The problem of course is that even though it may technically qualify as *reality*, much of it isn’t *actuality*. They edit those programs, if something happens they don’t want you to see, you don’t see it, you don’t get to see the cast and crew behind the cameras having BBQ chicken while the contestants on “Survivor” seem to be starving. So it qualifies as *reality* but it’s not really *actuality*, it’s not a true play by play of what’s happening in that house, or on that island, or at that gym or whatever. If something happens that the cameras missed, they may have the people do it again if it’d make for a great TV moment. Is all that you’re seeing “real?” Technically, it happened, after all it’s on camera, but in actuality it’s not all it’s cracked up to be. It has an *appearance* of one thing, but the *actuality* underneath it is completely different.

and In Mark Ch 11 we find Jesus getting up close and personal with people and places in such a way as to distinguish and discern the difference between *reality* and *actuality*; the *pretense* is one thing, but the actual *performance* is quite another. There’s a show, but there’s no substance, you might say the *façade* is there of drawing near to God with mouths, honoring Him with lips, but the *fact* is that hearts are far from Him, the reality is there, the actuality, the authenticity is not.

and As we’ve noted along the way Jesus is continuing to move closer both geographically and chronologically to the cross. As the curtain draws back on Ch 11 we’ve entered into the last week of the life of Jesus on the “pre-side” of the cross. and As the scene comes into focus it’s with preparations being made for what’s become known as “Palm Sunday.”

#### Vs 1-6

We’ve been watching over the last few Ch’s as Jesus has been making His way in a very calculated manner to Jerusalem. Ch 11 informs us that He’s now only about 2 miles east of Jerusalem there in the area of Bethany. Now the area of Bethany may ring a bell in your mind because that was where the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus was located. As a matter of fact it was too long ago (prior to this event) that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. and John’s gospel tells us that there was no small number of people who were in the entourage that surrounded Jesus on *this* day because of *that* fact, they’d heard that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead and they wanted to see this dead guy who’d come back to life.

Be that as it may Vs 1 finds them about 2 miles east of Jerusalem at the Mt of Olives where Jesus sends 2 of His disciples. It’s noted very carefully for us, we’re not told who those

disciples were, only the # of disciples Jesus sent. Why? Why did Jesus send 2? Why not just send 1 guy over there to snag the colt? Because it's always just wise that whenever possible we don't fly solo when it comes to ministry endeavors or engagements. It makes for accountability, it makes for a reliable testimony, there's greater strength in 2 than in one.

The bible tells us that things are established on the basis of 2 or more witnesses. We read in **Eccl 4:12**, "*Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him.*" There's a strength in the presence of a united front that's not found singularly. and There's obvious accountability, we might have the tendency to wander into certain environments or engage in a particular conversation that we otherwise wouldn't if we had a brother or a sister with us. It's just wisdom to not enter into things on behalf of the Lord alone; (whenever possible). So Jesus tells them in Vs 2-3...

### **Vs2-3**

Now the question comes up, was this something that Jesus prearranged or was this prophetic insight on His behalf? I'm not sure that it matters; it's very possible that Jesus knew the owner of the colt, requested its services, so he reserved it for Jesus. It's just as possible that Jesus made no prearrangements told His disciples what was going to happen and they found it just as He said (even to the point of meeting some light resistance and how to overcome it).

I think for us (amongst other things that I'll draw your attention to momentarily) what we need to see here is that the Lord gave them direction and they *obeyed it*. They didn't question Him, they didn't "what if" Him, they didn't say, "Lord that sounds a bit unorthodox and perhaps a bit presumptuous for us to just roll into a village, find someone's colt and just take it from them, what if they accuse of trying to steal it?" Jesus simply gave them direction and they carried it out; that's almost a miracle in itself. Because more often than not the Lord meets resistance in us. He can't simply share something with us in His word and we just obey, we've always got to 2<sup>nd</sup> *guess* it, or justify our position *in* it, He can't simply say "do it" and it's done. They realized that this may not have seemed to make the most sense. They weren't supposed to barter for it, or buy it, just take it. He didn't tell them why, He didn't tell them what for, yet they trusted Him even with the seemingly little information He gave to them and they obeyed. Or to understand that another way; they placed faith in His word and they acted on it. God help us to place faith in His word, and act on it. We don't have to understand it, it doesn't have to make sense, we don't have to know "why" or "what for" we're just going to obey.

So the 1<sup>st</sup> thing He tells them is "where." "In the village opposite you;" the next thing He tells them is "what." "A colt tied on which no one has sat." Now they're not tracking with this right now, it's just another day in the life of Jesus, but as they look back at this on the opposite side of the cross this will all begin to make sense. Why a colt? and Why a colt upon which no one has sat? and Notice the detail, He makes sure to tell them that it's a colt that's tied, it's not in a stable, it's tied. What's the deal there? Again, as for now it's seems to be simple instruction, but when they look back they'll put the pieces together.

There's a reason it's a donkey's colt (as opposed to full grown), there's a reason it's tied, there's reason no one has sat on it. Because this is the animal that's been ordained from before the foundations of the earth to usher the Messiah into Jerusalem on it's back. and Whenever an animal was going to be used for a sacred task it was to have been an animal that had never been placed into "ordinary/common" service. Even secular/pagan cultures acknowledged that.

Whenever the ark was taken by the Philistines and then sent back because they were being plagued, you remember that they took 2 milk cows *“that had never been yoked”* and hitched the cart to them (1 Sam 6:7), they were about to be placed into “sacred service” they weren’t to have been employed in a common manner prior. So Jesus requires a colt that no one has ever sat upon before (which by the way only continues to display His Lordship over creation, you don’t generally get on an animal that’s never been ridden with no bit, bridle or anything and it simply takes you where you want to go. But with Jesus it’s no problem, it’s His creation.)

But Messianic signals are being sent through Jesus all through this happening here. He draws attention to the colt being tied. We read in *Gen 49:10-11*, *“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people. Binding his donkey to the vine, And his donkey's colt to the choice vine,”* He’s sending the signal “Shiloh (or Messiah) has come.” Again in *Zech 9:9* *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.”* Jesus is fulfilling prophecy right in front of their eyes, this is the day that the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it! What day? The day that Messiah is revealed to the nation of Israel, it was prophesied to the very day that He would be there, the manner in which He would make His entrance; it was all there in the scriptures. *Dan 9:25*, *“Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times.”* Of course we find Artaxerxes issuing that decree in Nehemiah Ch 2 which happened to be March 14<sup>th</sup> 445 B.C. So from March 14<sup>th</sup> 445 B.C. there would be a period of time adding up to 7-7yr periods and 62-7yr periods going by the Babylonian calendar under which it was prophesied. Or to understand that another way 173,880 days. In exactly 173,880 days from the day Artaxerxes issued the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem to Nehemiah the Messiah would make His entrance into the city. How? Zech 9:9, riding on a donkey’s colt; it was all right there, but they missed it. (The date by the way...April 6<sup>th</sup> 32 A.D.) Now, Daniel prophecies 70-7 yr periods, however he tells us that after the 69<sup>th</sup> Messiah would be cut off...but not for Himself. That will be fulfilled in less than a week from this point, it’s a reference to the cross whereby Jesus was cut off, crucified, but not for Himself. When then does the final week come into play? We call it the Great tribulation when the Anti-Christ makes a covenant with Israel and then breaks it 3½ yrs into it. It’s all right there in Daniel Ch 9.

So Jesus is showing them who He is here through the fulfillment of the scriptures, and yet as it was prophesied, rather than receive Him, they’ll reject Him and He’ll bear the weight of the sin of the world upon the cross for you and for me.

One final thought here before we move on. There in Vs 3 Jesus says, “If anyone gives you any flack, you tell them ‘the Lord has need of it’ and they’ll back off.” Is it just me or is there something that sorta takes us back about that phrase? I didn’t think the Lord had *need* of anything. Why would the Creator of *all* things, have need of *anything*? The same reason He borrowed a manger, a boat, an upper room and a tomb. *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.” 2 Cor 8:9* He has willfully chosen to place Himself in a position

where He needs to partner with us to see His will accomplished through us. It blows our minds yet God has initiated a *relationship* with us. Now I'm not referencing His ultimate agenda (that book has already been written) but on a personal/practical scale. God's got a great work He wants to do in your family, He won't do it unless you're willing to partner with Him, He "needs" you to cooperate and obey. He's got great things in store for your marriage, this community, whatever. But it's been said (and in it's proper context it's correct), "We *can't* do it with out the Lord, and the Lord *won't* do it with out us." He's chosen to work both in us and through us for His good pleasure in the accomplishing of His purposes. The question is are we willing, are we submissive to His direction, His correction in our lives?

When the Lord has "need," in the sense of wanting to work through you in regards to your time, your energies, your efforts, your resources, are you willing to "untie" them and *immediately* release those things into His care, or are their conditions that need to be met 1<sup>st</sup>...

### Vs7-10

What a scene; and we love it because it's just so right. Jesus for the most part was a man who was despised and rejected of men. Sure a lot of folks hung around Him hoping for a free meal or a beneficial miracle, but by comparison very few actually committed themselves to following Him whole heartedly, unreservedly. and Generally Jesus would back away from and discourage the public praise of man, but here He not only received it, He encouraged it. This was the day the Lord made; the people were to rejoice and to be glad in it. Luke's gospel tells us, "*And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, 'Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.' But He answered and said to them, 'I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.'*" Luke 19:39-40 He's fostering and facilitating the praises of the people; though we kinda wish He'd have quieted the people so we could have the record of the 1<sup>st</sup> ever "rock concert" as the original "stones" would've cried out!

In Vs 8 Mark mentions leafy branches, John's gospel tells us they were from palm trees, hence "Palm Sunday." The people are paying rightful homage to Jesus, laying their clothes on the road, kind of a make shift "red carpet" entry fit for a king. and The way Vs 9 reads is that there were people following before and after Him so that the Ps that they're shouting (118:25, 26) it's being initiated by one group, then rounded out and finished by the other. Something to the effect of "Hosanna!" and The other group cries out, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes the name of the Lord!" Then the 1<sup>st</sup> group, "Hosanna in the highest!"

and What they're literally crying is "Save now!" (That's what Hosanna means) "Save now O God Most High," or "Who dwells in the highest." (Kind of a thing), and It's such an appropriate cry because that's exactly what Jesus came to do, but once again it's like same terms but different definitions. Because what *they* meant by "save now" and what Jesus was going to do to bring salvation were 2 totally different things. The people were excited at the prospect of "the kingdom of our father David coming in the name of the Lord." They were looking for a reestablishing of Israel's earthly glory like unto David's reign 1,000 yrs earlier. They were welcoming Jesus on the basis of what they thought He'd do for them... It's always a mistake to welcome Jesus because we think He is going to do something we want Him to do. He's not here to do our bidding...we're here to do His, we've got to be willing to come to Him on *His* terms and willfully, obediently submit to what *He* wants.

They were looking for a Messiah who would reign politically, unleash a revolution militarily in order to cast off the iron boot of Roman oppression. But that's not the kingdom Jesus came to establish, that's not the freedom He came to bring, or the salvation He was there to offer. Jesus came bring freedom from sin, to offer salvation from the penalty of sin and eternal separation from God. and This event would trigger the final chain of events that would culminate at the cross. The religious leaders didn't want to crucify Jesus at this time because of the overwhelming amount of people in the city, figured their might be an uproar because of the people that looked to Him as a prophet or their Messiah. But it was necessary that the Lamb of God slain from before the foundations of the earth be put to death when? On Passover.

### Vs11

Where was His point of interest? In the way things were *politically*? No, how were things going *spiritually* He went into Jerusalem and into *the temple*. and When He got there what did He do? He "looked around at all things," which is to say that He was *inspecting* the premises, He sees the "reality" of what's going on, He's investigating the "*actuality*." There's sacrifices, people paying temple tax, the reality is that what's supposed to be happening is happening, the *actuality* however is something completely difference, there's a show, but there's no substance. The chief priests and everyone is there, the leaders drawing near to God with their lips, honoring Him with their mouths, their hearts are some place completely different. The day is late; no doubt committing what He's seen to prayer for the evening He goes back to Bethany with the 12 (probably stayed with Lazarus).

### Vs12-14

Now we shouldn't think that there's a coincidence in the fact that Jesus comes to the temple and makes an inspection and then the next day He cleanses the temple but sandwiched between His coming to the temple and His cleansing of the temple is His cursing of the fig tree.

and When we 1<sup>st</sup> read this we might be prone to justify the fact that we may have a tendency to get a bit cranky when we're hungry, after all it seems that Jesus did to ;o)! In reality that's not what's happening at all. Now we read that it wasn't the season for figs, we're in early April here, and figs don't really come into full ripe fruit until May or June, some in August. However there's what's called the "first ripe fruits" or the "breba" crop that comes in earlier and is edible as well. Now I'm not a botanist or an Arborist or what have you, but I'm told that by the time the leaves are in full foliage on a fig tree that this type of crop is reality available and fully edible, and you can Google images and see pictures of the breba crop of figs. But all that to say this, this tree had *pretense* about it, but it's performance was something totally different. It had the appearance in *reality* of being green and lush and full of fruit, but upon closer inspection, in *actuality* it was completely barren. When you looked at it from a distance it looked good, full of promise, things seemed to be in order, but the closer you got *to* it the more apparent it was that nothing good was coming *of* it.

In Luke's gospel Jesus spoke a parable saying, "*A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?' But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.'*" Luke 13:6-9 The owner of the vineyard is looking for a fruitful return on His

investments, and the point here is that He extends grace, and patience, grace and patience, but eventually He comes to a point whereby He concedes the tree is simply not going to be fruitful so it's destroyed discarded.

Over and over again the bible pictures Israel as the fig tree. and Jesus is saying, "I've extended grace and patience, grace and patience, I've cultivated, nurtured, watered, and pruned, but in coming to you again I'm only finding foliage with no fruit, the appearance of faith, but the fact is your heart is far from God. The *reality* is there, you're in the temple, sacrificing, serving, going through the motions, the *actuality* is that it's smoke and mirrors, you're ripping off the people, serving only yourselves, you're full of activity practically, but you're empty of true worship and a heart felt relationship with God spiritually... and judgment is coming.

But here's where it gets personal, what does the Lord find when He gets up close and personal with me...with you?

At a distance things look good, the branches have all kinds of leaves on them, you go to church, you maybe even raise your hands during the worship service, you didn't even need a bible today you remembered your own. You use phrases like, "praise the Lord" "glory to God" and "how's it going *brother*" but when Jesus draws in close what does He really find? Don't think that green leaves will serve as an adequate bluff and He'll look the other way when it comes to your life, He will inspect me and inspect you closely. He's looking for fruit, don't think that going through the motions will stay, or somehow halt, or put off the judgment of God in your life. Jesus confirmed this tree in it's already resolved position. If there was no fruit on it by now, there wouldn't be, it wasn't going to be fruitful at all. and So Jesus said, "Fine, I'm finished with you..." What a warning to be found in this passage for you and me...

Jesus is looking for fruit in our lives, the fruit of the Spirit (the love of God, peace, joy, patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control). There's the fruit of a holy life, the fruit of financial giving, the fruit of leading others to Christ, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name. Read the word it's all there. The Lord is looking for these things in our lives, not legally as a list of do's and don'ts, but the overflow having a love relationship with Him. You can make a list and go through the motions (that's leaves), or you can abide in Christ and allow these things to naturally (supernaturally) overflow from your life as you walk with Him, spend time in His word, respond to His Spirit...you see it all comes down to the heart. Are you abiding in Christ (truly) or are you drawing near to God with your mouth, honoring Him with your lips, but your heart...is far from Him?

### **Vs15-19**

We'll pick up at this point next time, but Jesus cursed the fruitless fig tree, then came into the heart of Jerusalem and cleansed the temple. The house of God was meant to be a place of worship and communion *with* God, they'd made it a place to make merchandise of the people *of* God. and Don't think that it's saying they were selling copies of the studies, or Mochas or something like that. They were taking things that were necessary for the obedience of God and looking to rip people off by them and make a personal fortune from them.

You'd bring your sacrifice, but it had to be with out blemish. So the priest would examine it to see if it was acceptable and invariably find some fault with it. Then you could purchase a pre-approved sacrifice at an exorbitant rate. You want to be right with God don't you? So what do you do? You need to pay your temple tax, but you have Roman currency, or Greek currency,

it's got a man's picture on it, that's idolatry. You need the temple currency, we'll exchange that for you but it's going to cost you tremendously. and That type of thing just ate Jesus up because it took advantage of people wanting to be made right with God, and misrepresented the heart of God toward them. So Jesus cleaned house.

and That's what I want to leave you with. Jesus couldn't cleanse the temple until He 1<sup>st</sup> came *into* the temple. The bible likens our body unto a temple in which God wants to abide, He wants to be enthroned with in the temple of your heart. and So many people think, "Well, I've got to stop that, quit the other thing, and start this and then I'll let Jesus into my life." It doesn't work that way, Jesus comes into the rat race, the chaos and cluster that you call life just the way it is, then *He* commences to do the cleaning. All you've got to do is let Him in.

Jesus is drawing near to each one of us today, and as He's inspecting us, what does He find in us? Complete chaos, a show with out substance, pretense with out practice, or is He finding fruit, fruit that's remaining so that His Father might be glorified. I'm not too interested in "reality" what's the "actuality?"

#### Prayer Points:

Lord take us to that place where we can see clearly where we're at with You...It's ez to put on a pretense, to put up a façade of one thing when the fact is something completely different. God teach us to lead holy lives, teach us what it means to truly abide in Christ, to bear fruit and that our fruit might remain. We don't want to go through motions, we want to know You, to walk *with* You, and be used *by* You. Save now Jesus, take us and make of us what You desire us to be, rescue us from our own ways, and we'll give You praise.

and If today you're here and you haven't received Christ, He's not come into your heart, overturned those self seeking or wicked ways, you've not repented of your sin but today you stand ready to do just that. You want to let Jesus in to have His way in you, to save you and set you free from the bondage of sin that you might walk *with* Him and abide *in* Him and have a life set apart *to* Him, that you might see Him one day face to face and hear, "Well done good and faithful servant, enter in to the joy of your Lord" then why not pray today, why not open your heart right now and say, "Jesus here I am, have Your way in me?"