

I. Intro

A. Review of the Passage

1. First, Jesus **curses** the fig tree
2. Then, he cleanses the Temple
3. Next He gives the Lesson of the Fig Tree
4. Where He taught on Prayer, Faith, and Forgiveness.
5. Finally, Jesus' authority is questioned by the Jewish religious leaders
6. and with the wisdom of God, He doesn't give them a direct answer, but instead tells...
7. The Parable of the Vinedressers

II. Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

A. We'll pick up in Mark 11 verse 12 ***"Now the next day..."***

1. It's the day after the triumphal entry, which was on Sunday.
2. Therefore, it is Monday, around April 2, AD 30 on our calendars.
 - a) On the Jewish calendar, it was the 11th of Nissan.
 - b) Jesus would die on the 14th.

B. Verse 12: ***"...when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry."***

1. We see Jesus on this particular morning in his humanity.
2. He was hungry and in need of some nourishment and food as He was traveling from Bethany where He was lodging to Jerusalem.

C. Verse 13 ***"And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. 14 In response Jesus***

said to it, “Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.” And His disciples heard it.

1. The first question we may ask is why Jesus would take this seemingly extreme action against the fig tree when it wasn’t even the season for figs.
2. We’ll answer that as we go. But let us first recognize that the fig tree lacked something Jesus expected to be able to find on it.

D. I’d like to journey through the Old Testament’s mention of fig trees.

1. They first show up in Genesis.
 - a) Fig trees are the only tree we know by name from the garden of Eden.
 - b) It was fig leaves that Adam and Eve sewed together to hide the shame of their nakedness after they sinned.
 - c) God graciously replaced their inadequate, self-made coverings with animal skin by shedding innocent blood for the guilty—we recognize as a picture of the future redemptive work of Jesus on the cross.

E. Later, when God gave the promised land of Israel to the Jewish people, it was not just any old piece of land. It was a good land with an abundance of wonderful nourishment, including fig trees.

1. Deuteronomy 8:7-8: ***“For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey;”***

F. Now, there was a stipulation for staying in the land. God said many times, “If you, then I,” and He was very clear about that with this nation. As a result of

their disobedience and refusal to walk in God's ways, Israel was no stranger to exile. Therefore, sitting under your own vine and fig tree was a sign of blessing and security in the land. 1 Kings 4:25: ***"And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan as far as Beersheba, all the days of Solomon."***

G. It's almost as if the fig tree was a barometer of the physical and spiritual health of the nation of Israel.

H. They were described as lacking fruit in times of disobedience and flourishing in times of restoration.

1. Jeremiah 8:12-13: ***Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed, Nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; In the time of their punishment they shall be cast down," says the Lord. "I will surely consume them," says the Lord. "No grapes shall be on the vine, Nor figs on the fig tree, And the leaf shall fade; And the things I have given them shall pass away from them."***

I. So we see that it's not without significance that Jesus curses a fig tree.

J. Additionally, to understand this passage, we need to know that a fig tree has two crops in a growing season. Fig trees take time to grow and be nurtured—therefore, when you see a fruitful fig tree it indicates that the gardener has been continuously and steadfastly tending to its growth over many years. In the spring, the tree puts forth leaves.

1. When it does, you will generally see these little green knobs begin to form.

2. They are the green figs spoken of in Song of Solomon 2:13: ***“The fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell. Rise up, my love, my fair one, And come away.”***

K. I read that these edible green figs are produced from last years reserves and act as indicators of the fig harvest for the new season. Eventually, they fall off the tree and are replaced by the figs that will grow and ripen in the fall. If, in the early part of the growing season, there are none of these green knobs, there will be no later figs, and the tree will serve as useless that year, not producing any fruit.

L. The fig tree Jesus cursed was symbolic of the unfruitful nation of Israel.

M. When He said, ***“Let no one eat fruit from you ever again,”*** - the Greek word ever is “*aion*,” which can refer to forever in some instances, but in other places it refers to a period of time, or an age of time, as it does here.

1. Let me show you another place where the Greek word “*aion*” does not speak of forever.

2. We read it in the parable of the sower which we studied last semester: ***Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world [aion], the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. Mark 4:18-19***

N. Here, we see “*aion*” is speaking of this present age when it says “the cares of this world,” alluding to what we see clearly in other places in scripture that there is a future age when Jesus returns to this earth physically and rules and reigns from Jerusalem.

1. We know it is at that time that the fig tree Israel, as a nation, will no longer be without fruit, for they will have received their Messiah, Jesus.

2. In fact, their faith in Him is what triggers His second coming.

O. Notice what Jesus said causes unfruitfulness.

1. The word is choked out - the word is the truth that we so desperately need.

This truth, found in the word of God and in the person of Jesus causes fruit in our lives. And how is it choked out?

a) By the cares of this world

b) The deceitfulness of riches

c) And the desires for other things

III. Jesus Cleanses the Temple

A. Now we come to Verse 15 in our text. ***“So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. 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.’ ”***

1. This was Jesus’ second cleansing of the temple. He began His ministry three years prior cleansing the temple, also before Passover. Notice what Jesus does in verse 17.

a) ***“Then He taught saying to them, “is it not written?”***

b) He taught them what God’s word says.

- c) He doesn't just give up on the people who were causing neglect. He taught them His ways again and gives them yet another chance to be cleansed and walk in His purpose for the temple, which was to be a house of prayer for all nations.
- d) And isn't it true of our temples, the place where God dwells within us.
- e) We too need continual cleansing when the unfruitful habits of our old nature return and the temptations of the flesh defile this holy temple of God.
- f) Sometimes we fail to cut off the things that cause us to stumble, as we were reminded of in Mark 9 which says, ***"if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off."***
 - (1) the Lord leads us to repentance for our peace and freedom.
 - (2) When these temples need cleansing, Jesus does for us exactly what He did that day in the temple when He showed them their offense and graciously taught them His ways saying, ***"is it not written?"***
 - (a) Is it not written, you shall have no other gods before me?
 - (b) Is it not written, trust in the Lord with all your heart?
 - (c) Is it not written be anxious for nothing but in everything pray with thanksgiving?
 - (d) It was an invitation back.
 - (3) With love, grace, and tender mercy, He takes the time to teach us when we are astray in our thinking and our behaviors. Aren't you so grateful for that?

B. According to Luke's gospel, Jesus lamented over the city of Jerusalem before cleansing the temple, saying as he wept, ***"if you had only known the things that make for your peace."*** There is a theme we're beginning to see repeated in all these events: Jesus weeping over the city, the cursing of the fig tree and the cleansing of the temple. And it was this: the nation of Israel was barren. They possessed the things that make for barrenness: the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things which had entered in and choked the word, just as Jesus said.

1. This can happen in our lives too and it causes us to be without peace and to be unfruitful.
2. For them, it was choking out the very word become flesh, Jesus their Messiah.
3. Both the fig tree and the temple had the outward appearance of health and vitality, just as Jesus said to the Pharisees later, also on this same day, recorded in Matthew 23:27-28: ***"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. 28 Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."***

C. This is not the first time Israel has experienced unfruitfulness or barrenness because they've rejected the word of the Lord, nor the first time they were being led astray by their leaders.

1. Before the Babylonian captivity and the destruction of the first temple in 586 BC, God asked the prophet Jeremiah to plead with His people from the temple.
2. At this time, the nation was refusing to truly repent (which means to change their mind in areas their thoughts and ways were not aligned with His and they would not return to the Lord.
3. In Jeremiah Chapter 7 the Lord says something very similar to the nation of Israel which Jesus said on that day in AD 30, ***“Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it,” says the Lord.”*** Jeremiah 7:11

D. God saw the barrenness of Israel before their captivity by the Babylonians and the destruction of the first temple; He saw the barrenness of Israel in the first century, which led to their rejection of their Messiah and the subsequent destruction of the rebuilt temple that would take place again in AD 70.

1. And before each of these events took place, God sent His prophets to warn the people and give them opportunity to change their ways and yolk themselves back to Him.
2. And that is the parable of the vinedressers in Chapter 12 from our lesson. They rejected all those God sent. And just as He saw barren Israel, He saw their barren leaders, and He sees us too.
 - a) He sees when the inward doesn't match the outward and we are simply trees with leaves and no fruit.

- b) But He's ready to pour out His grace, and restore the things that make for our peace, if we will just be willing to see what He sees and respond to Him teaching us what is written.
- E. Let's go back to Mark 11 Verse 18 - ***And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching. When evening had come, He went out of the city.***

IV. The Lesson of the Fig Tree

- A. Now we arrive at the Lesson of the Fig Tree
 - 1. Here is where I wanted Jesus to expound on the full reason why he cursed the fig tree.
 - 2. But as we will see, that's not what the disciples wanted to know, and Jesus had another lesson in mind regarding faith, prayer, and forgiveness.
- B. Verse 20 - ***Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. 21 And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.***
 - 1. In response Jesus addressed the disciple's question recorded in Matthew's account of this event. ***"And when the disciples saw it, they marveled saying, "How did the fig tree wither away so soon?"*** Matthew 21:20.
- C. You see, the disciples wanted to know about the miracle.
 - 1. For a fig tree to dry up from the roots should have taken weeks, but this one withered immediately.
 - 2. They were essentially asking Jesus, "How did this happen?"

V. Faith and Prayer

A. Verse 22 ***So Jesus answered and said to them, “Have faith in God. 23 For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. 24 Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.***

B. From Jesus’ answer, we glean three essentials of prayer, especially when we’re asking for a miracle.

1. The first essential is, ***“Have faith in God,”*** it says in verse 22 and, ***“Believe,”*** in verse 24, and, ***“Do not doubt”*** in verse 23.

a) We’re not putting our faith in our ability to pray lofty, elaborate prayers with just the right words.

b) The ability God has given us to pray in the authority of His name and through His power should never be elevated above the humility and reverence we are to have when we pray.

c) Neither is our faith to be placed in the specific answer or miracle we are seeking.

(1) When we do this, and we do this sometimes, we’re putting our faith and all our hope in one particular outcome, and failing to put faith and hope fully in the Lord, surrendering our will for His will.

(2) And that is where many go wrong in their focus of praying in faith.

- d) Jesus is calling out the importance of putting our faith in God alone. This requires knowing who our God is so we can trust Him with our whole heart concerning those things we cry out to Him for.
- e) Doesn't it even require faith to pray instead of worrying about our problems, or dwelling on our problems, or trying to figure out our own answers to our problems?
 - (1) Beware that the enemy comes against to condemn us concerning our faith. But there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
 - (a) We can rest and trust Him in that.
 - (b) Be encouraged today that simply through taking your needs and your mountains to the Lord in prayer and most importantly entrusting them to Him, leaving it completely in His hands, you are demonstrating the kind of faith that Jesus is teaching.
- f) The second essential is given in verse 24 and it's my favorite element of prayer as I pour out my heart to the Lord. It says, ***"Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray..."***
- g) ASK is a synonym for prayer.
 - (1) It is not a demand but rather a humble request of a Sovereign God who knows our needs before we ask but still calls us to ask.
 - (a) You'll recall the account of Blind Bartimaeus from chapter 10 when he cried out, ***"Son of David, have mercy on me,"*** and Jesus answered him, ***"What is it You want me to do for you?"***
 - (b) Jesus already knew his need, but wanted him to ask.

(c) You might not be Blind Bartimaeus, but you may be Sorrowful Susan. Or Fearful Francis. Or, In Need Nancy. Or Hurting Heather. Or fill in your name and your need.

(d) Jesus is asking you, ***“What is it you want me to do for you?”***

(e) James 4:3 tells us: ***“You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”***

(2) Psalm 62:8: ***Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.***

h) We’re calling upon His name when we pray.

(1) His name reveals who He is,

(a) like El Elyon the God Most High who is Sovereign,

(b) El Shaddai, God Almighty,

(c) and Jehovah Rapa, the Lord who Heals.

i) When we pray according to the word of God and the will of God, that is when we will have what we ask.

j) The mature believer surrenders their will to the Father’s and remains obedient to pray knowing that sometimes God’s answer is, “Yes.”

Sometimes it is, “No, I have something else in mind that is beyond your ability to see,” and so often His answer is, “Wait on me.” But we do not just wait; we’re actively trusting Him and can receive from His abundant supply of peace while we do.

(1) Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.

- k) Something else we come to realize about prayer is the importance of surrendering our will as it concerns the timing of an answer.
- l) So, sisters, I encourage you today to keep praying.
 - (1) Pray for your children, pray for your loved one, your marriage, your husband, your beloved prodigal, your physical healing or direction, provision, your impossible situation.
 - (2) Keep asking.
 - (a) Hannah did.
 - (b) The persistent woman in the parable Jesus told about prayer did.
 - (c) Anna did.
 - (d) The first century church did.
 - (e) So many of you are doing this right now as you wait on the Lord in your situation.
 - (f) This requires maturity in our faith to persevere in trust.
 - m) So put your faith in God and ask.
- 2. As we move on to Jesus' next point, we see the third essential of prayer He gives here: Forgive.

C. Forgiveness

- 1. Back to Verse 25 ***“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”***
 - a) The instruction is whenever we pray, we are to forgive.

- b) Also, notice the words if you have anything. Big or small. Against anyone.
 - (1) Even minor offenses still have a big effect on us.
 - (2) What should we do with our hurts, discouragement, anger, disappointment, pain, or depression?
 - (3) God is asking us to bring it to Him and with His help, forgive.
- 2. I know personally how difficult this command can be at times.
 - a) If we had time, I'd tell my story of childhood sexual abuse, which is in large part my parent's story of forgiveness toward someone who hurt their children and their demonstration of a lifetime of forgiveness, even in their pain.
 - (1) Their choice to forgive has influenced many people including my abuser. They chose to maintain a relationship because it was a family member, but things naturally looked very different after that, and that's necessary sometimes.
 - (2) Their choice to forgive has deeply impacted me too, helping me to choose forgiveness.
 - b) Or, I could also speak about the effects of living under the weight of bitterness that takes root when we don't forgive and grows like a cancer, affecting us emotionally, spiritually, and even physically.
- 3. Since time won't allow us to go into all those details, I sensed the Lord leading me to speak about the bondage Satan wants to hold us in when we've been hurt and the freedom that is extended to us through the cross of grace.

- a) The offense was outside our control. But our response is 100% our choice.
- b) Offenses against us take place because we live in a fallen world. Until Jesus returns, we are going to be affected by the sin that exists all around us.
 - (1) And let us not forget the sin that exists within us too.
 - (2) We often offend others, and we need forgiveness.
 - (a) Pastor Chuck Smith said that forgiveness is our greatest need.
 - (b) I would agree. And it's not only salvational forgiveness. It is also the cleansing that we receive as saved daughters of God when we confess our ongoing sin. Jesus died, not only to save us eternally, but so we can walk in the freedom He purchased for us, today. He is faithful to forgive and cleanse us. It is His work, His faithfulness, His offer of freedom, He does it. We just play one small part.
- c) ***"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*** 1 John 1:9
 - (1) "Oh the freedom cleansing brings."
 - (a) If you're taking notes I encourage you to write that down.
 - (b) It's the main point today.
 - (c) *"Ooooh the freedom cleansing brings."*
- d) Quite often, someone else's offense against us causes us to offend God in our response, and that's when we become captive to our sinful flesh if we're not cleansed.

(1) But Jesus came for the captives, and for those who are bound. He came for the poor and the brokenhearted. His work is to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, to break every yoke, to cover the naked, and there is healing in His wings.

(2) We receive all of these things as a child of God because of the person and work of our Lord and Savior, Jesus through one important thing: His grace and forgiveness toward us.

(3) If we've truly made Him Lord of our life, not just calling Him Lord, but having a willingness to do the things He says, no matter how hard, then His Spirit will also lead us to walk in freedom by submitting to His loving command to forgive each and every time that we stand praying and there is an offense against us.

(4) **The key to forgiveness** is willingness

(5) If you want to unlock what may seem sometimes like an impossibility to forgive, you must be willing to obey.

(6) But we can't do it without the help of His Spirit within us.

(7) He knows your hurt and has your best interest at heart.

4. I want to ask and answer two practical questions that will help us if we're struggling to forgive something in the past or going on presently. We can all take note of these things, because each of us deals with struggling to forgive sometimes and we know future situations will arise where we are faced again with the choice to forgive or not.

- a) Question 1: What are the steps to forgive?
- b) Question 2: How do I know I've truly forgiven?
- c) We'll start with question 1.
- d) Because forgiveness isn't a feeling, it's a choice, I must first take my eyes and thoughts off my circumstances and especially off my feelings and put them instead onto the Lord, and on His truth.
 - (1) Is there anything I need forgiveness for?
 - (2) Am I only seeing the spec in my brother's eye without being willing to acknowledge and deal with the plank in my own?
 - (3) Does anyone have anything against me?
 - (a) These are my wrongs against others.
 - (b) Jesus said in Matthew 5 if your brother has something against you, to leave your gift at the altar
 - (c) and be reconciled to your brother by seeking forgiveness *from* others in this process too.
- e) In summary, first eyes off my circumstance and feelings and onto the Lord and His truth. Secondly, we make the choice to forgive by faith and in obedience.
 - (1) Once we've handed over our feelings to a God who is completely trustworthy with them, they are not longer the barricade that is keeping me in bondage to bitterness and unforgiveness.
 - (2) I'm putting my faith in Him to take care of my feelings and bring me and the situation healing in His way and His time.

(3) And I'm choosing forgiveness with Him by my side leading me and helping me through His power toward me.

(a) Paul spoke about this power in Ephesians chapters 1 and 3. He said, ***"and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power." Ephesians 1:19***

(b) ***Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us (wow), 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Ephesians 3:20-21***

- f) You read in your lesson this week that forgiveness means to "let them go". It's my favorite definition.
- g) Our Lord powerfully did this on the cross for us. He asks us to do it for others.
- h) Please know that forgiveness does not excuse nor justify what has been done against us. It's simply letting them go and releasing them from the debt they owe you.
- i) ***"Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord."***
 - (1) We leave it in His hands completely.
 - (2) Why?
 - (3) Because we trust what He has said.

- j) Lastly, we *continue* to walk by faith in the decision we made, still denying our flesh and feelings.
5. Because we all know from experience that the hurt can remain after we've forgiven.
- a) The memory,
 - b) and sometimes the affect on our lives is still there.
6. So, let's answer Question #2: how do we know when we've truly forgiven?
- a) To recap, by now we've put our eyes on the Lord, handed Him our feelings, and willingly made the choice to forgive by faith and with His help.
 - b) We can know our choice was genuine when we no longer filter everything related to that person through the lens of what they did or said to us
 - (1) both in our minds
 - (2) and in action.
 - c) We're not holding it against them.
 - d) We've let them go and committed the rest to the Lord purely by faith. We allow the Lord to lead us from there in His ways with the rest.
7. Now, I'd like us to consider Jesus' words, ***"if you do not forgive, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses,"*** if He is perhaps not speaking of salvational forgiveness, but forgiveness of another kind.
- a) Let me explain.
 - b) For those who are saved by faith, our imperfect standing before a perfect God has been made right simply because we are in His Son. The

righteousness of Jesus' is imputed to us. Nothing, nothing can change our position in Him. All of our past, present, and future sins received atonement, and we are justified, positionally, and saved and forgiven for eternity. That is positional righteousness.

8. But there is the practical righteousness of sanctification that needs to be restored when we sin. Let's read 1 John 1:9 again in context and realize that John is speaking to believers about being cleansed and forgiven when we don't practice the truth.

9. ***If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. 1 John 1:6-10***

10. When we walk in any kind of darkness, we're no longer practicing truth. So too, if we are walking in unforgiveness, we're no longer practicing truth.

- a) This is what Jesus was speaking about when He removed His garments and put on the towel of a servant around His waist. He washed His disciple's feet, and when He came to Peter, Peter said, "**Lord, you are washing my feet?**" Jesus answered that Peter could have no part with Him unless Jesus washed him. Peter was like, well then, please wash

ALL of me! But Jesus said, ***“He who is bathed needs only to wash His feet.”*** We’ve already been bathed and made clean by the blood of Jesus. But when our feet get dirty, so to speak, we need Jesus’ cleansing and forgiveness once again.

- b) We receive that cleansing through confessing our sin.
- c) Acknowledging what God already knows is there.
- d) And when we do, He forgives us. We don’t deserve it, do we? But He is faithful and just to forgive through His unlimited supply of grace.

11. If this temple of the Holy Spirit, (*us*), doesn’t receive this kind of ongoing cleansing, that’s when we will be the barren fig tree with leaves and no fruit and our prayers will be ineffective.

VI. The Remaining Passages

A. In the remaining portions of our passage we see Jesus’ authority questioned, and with great wisdom He chooses not to answer directly. However, Jesus goes on with a parable against the religious leaders who were God’s vine-dressers for His vineyard, Israel.

1. Throughout the nation’s history, they killed the prophets God sent to reveal where they were lacking fruit and to warn them of the coming judgement if they didn’t return to the Lord.
2. Their Gardener had been continuously and steadfastly there, tending to their growth.
 - a) But for generations, they resisted Him and all those God sent.
 - b) Even His own Son.

3. They were trees with leaves and no fruit.

- B. Let's end with John 15. A familiar passage, but one that we all need to hear again and again. ***"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.***

VII. Conclusion

- A. God desires to prune out of our lives anything that isn't pleasing to Him. When we're not practicing the truth, He's right there, teaching us, ***"is it not written?"***, and calling us back into the light through cleansing.
- B. Our Gardener is here today, tending to our growth, pruning us so we can bear more fruit.

VIII. In Closing

- A. I'd like you to get out the index card you were given when you walked in. If you didn't get a card, you can use your notebook or you'll find some extra cards and pens in the isles. In a moment, while the music plays, I'd like you to write two things: I confess, and I forgive.

1. "I confess" is intended to be a specific area the Lord may bring to mind where we know the truth but we're not practicing it. The word is being choked out and it's causing unfruitfulness.
 - a) Saying, "Lord, I confess this specific sin" and asking Him to forgive us is the only way to have these temples cleansed
 - b) Give the Lord permission as David prayed, "Search my heart and see if there is any wicked way in me."
2. The second thing I want you to write down is "I forgive".
 - a) In the presence of the Lord, ask, "Do I have anything against anyone?"
 - b) If you do, experience the freedom and peace of obeying by faith and write down, "I forgive," and then put their name and today's date.
3. You may want to turn around and kneel at your chair, which is a posture of submission. Or, you can kneel in your heart just the same. Either way, remember Jesus' words, "the one who is forgiven much, loves much."

IX. Song - *"In Moments Like These"* by Maranatha Music

X. Closing Words

- A. If there is someone you chose to forgive today, keep this card in your Bible
 1. When the enemy comes against you or your feelings of hurt return, you can go to this card and take your feelings into the presence of the Lord
 2. and simply say, "Lord, I've already forgiven by faith and I'm going to keep trusting You for the rest."
- B. I encourage you to make these two things, confession and forgiveness, a regular part of your life **whenever you stand praying**, so that we can walk in freedom

and practice truth as cleansed, fruitful daughters, walking worthy of our Lord Jesus and what He suffered on the cross for our greatest need, forgiveness.