

MARK

Chapter 11

The Triumphal Entry

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples **2** and said to them, **“Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. 3 If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.’” 4** And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. **5** And some of those standing there said to them, **“What are you doing, untying the colt?” 6** And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. **7** And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. **8** And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. **9** And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, **“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! 10 Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!” 11** And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

11:1–11 At this point a new section in the Gospel of Mark begins. Jesus arrives in Jerusalem, and the rest of his ministry takes place within the confines of the Holy City. The Triumphal Entry, which inaugurates Passion Week, is a deliberate Messianic action, and the clue to its understanding is found in Zec 9:9 (quoted in Mt 21:5; Jn 12:15). Jesus purposefully offers himself as the Messiah, knowing that this will provoke Jewish leaders to take action against him. (CSB)

The occasion for this text is the culmination of Jesus’ final journey to Jerusalem. Mk 10:32–34 sets the stage as the evangelist reports that Jesus with his disciples are on the road to Jerusalem. As they go, the Lord predicts his Passion and resurrection a third time. After James and John, the sons of Zebedee, make their petitions for places of prominence in the coming glory of the Lord (10:35–45), Jesus tells of his Baptism into death and the cup of his suffering, climaxing the discourse with the statement of the purpose of his coming: “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (10:45). This is followed by the healing of blind Bartimaeus (10:46–52). The blind beggar acclaims the coming King as “Jesus, Son of David” (v 47) and petitions him for mercy. The blind man receives the gift of sight and follows Jesus on the way to Jerusalem. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

11:1 *Mount of Olives*. Directly east of Jerusalem, it rises to a height of about 2,700 feet, some 200 feet higher than Mount Zion. Its summit commands a magnificent view of the city and especially of the temple. (CSB)

This verse locates Jesus’ final progress to Jerusalem as he is in the vicinity of Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives. Bethphage was a village near Jerusalem, although its exact location is uncertain. The name *bēthphagē* means “house of unripe figs” (see *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 1 [Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962], 396). Bethany was a small

village less than two miles from Jerusalem on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

This hill would scarcely have been so called if its groves had not been outstandingly luxuriant in comparison with the surrounding land and the olives not of economic importance for the city. Oil was probably the only export of Jerusalem. Gethsemane, which was located on the Mt of Olives, means an oil or perfume press. (Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus – Joachim Jeremias – page 7)

11:2 *the village ahead.* Probably Bethphage. (CSB)

colt. The Greek word can mean the young of any animal, but here it means the colt of a donkey (see Mt 21:2; Jn 12:15). (CSB)

which no one has ever ridden. Unused animals were regarded as especially suitable for religious purposes (see Nu 19:2; Dt 21:3; 1Sa 6:7). (CSB)

Unbroken colt, which was normally difficult to ride. (TLSB)

Jesus directs two of his disciples to go into the village, where they will find a colt, “on which no one has ever sat.” They are instructed to untie it and bring it to Jesus. The colt (*ho pōlos*) will be the vehicle for its Lord (*ho kurios*, v 3). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

11:3-6 Jesus anticipates that there might be those who question his requisitioning of the young donkey. The disciples are simply told to respond, “The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately” (v 3). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

11:3 *If anyone asks you.* The message concerning the colt is not directed specifically to the owner but to anyone who might question the disciples’ action. (CSB)

The owner may have known Jesus from previous trips to Jerusalem. (TLSB)

11:7-8 The colt is saddled with the garments of those who were with Jesus. Others use their clothing to pave the way for Jesus’ royal procession into the holy city. Some cut “leafy branches” (*stibadas*) to adorn the path of the Messiah. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

11:8 *branches.* The word means “leaves” or “leafy branches,” which were readily available in nearby fields. Only John mentions palm branches (Jn 12:13), which apparently came from Jericho, since they are not native to Jerusalem. (CSB)

11:9-10 Jesus is acclaimed with the shout of “Hosanna” (*hōsanna*). For a detailed study, see the article by E. Lohse in TDNT 9:682–84. Lohse sees the word as embracing both petition and praise as God is urgently called upon to save his people. The linkage of this cry to the acclamation derived from Ps 118:25–26 accents the messianic character of Jesus and his reign. He is the Son of David who comes to save now. The jubilant shouts of the crowd begin and end with hosanna: save now. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

The people welcomed Jesus with praise drawn from Ps 113–18. (TLSB)

11:9 *Blessed is he who comes.* A quotation of Ps 118:26, one of the Hallel (“Praise”) Psalms sung at Passover and especially fitting for this occasion. (CSB)

11:10 *the coming kingdom of our father David.* The Messianic kingdom promised to David's son (2Sa 7:11–14). (CSB)

11:11 *temple.* Outer court. (TLSB)

looked around ... late. Jesus inspected the temple (cf Mal 3:1). He would. (TLSB)

went out to Bethany. Apparently Jesus spent each night through Thursday of Passion Week in Bethany at the home of his friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus (see 11:19; 14:13; Mt 21:17; Jn 12:1–3). (CSB)

11:1–11 Jesus enters Jerusalem triumphantly as King, openly accepting messianic titles and fulfilling several OT prophecies. The disciples and the crowds expect Jesus to establish an earthly kingdom. They celebrate His arrival at Jerusalem without a clear view of His express purpose: to die for the sins of the world. Jesus enters Jerusalem in humility to fulfill the plan of salvation by laying down His life for sinners. • “All glory, laud, and honor To You, Redeemer, King, To whom the lips of children Made sweet hosannas ring. The multitude of pilgrims With palms before You went; Our praise and prayer and anthems Before You we present.” Amen. (LSB 442:3). (TLSB)

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

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

11:12–14 The curse and destruction of the fig tree warns Jesus' disciples of impending judgment against the temple and the unfruitful people. Works without faith are truly fruitless. True faith, and the life that flows from it, cannot be separated. They are the good and gracious gifts of our heavenly Father. • “In your hearts enthrone Him; There let Him subdue All that is not holy, All that is not true: Crown Him as your captain In temptation's hour; Let His will enfold you In its light and pow'r.” Amen. (LSB 512:5) (TLSB)

Jesus Clears the Temple

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

11:12 *The following next day.* Monday of Passion Week. (CSB)

11:13 *not the season for figs.* Fig trees around Jerusalem normally begin to get leaves in March or April but do not produce figs until their leaves are all out in June. This tree was an exception in that it was already, at Passover time, full of leaves. (CSB)

Early unripe figs should have been present (c Mar/Apr), even though the main harvest season had not yet arrived (Aug/Sep). The leaves should have served as a reliable indicator for these early figs. If the early figs do not appear, neither will the later ones. (TLSB)

11:14 *May no one ever eat fruit from you again.* Perhaps the incident was a parable of judgment, with the fig tree representing Israel (see Hos 9:10; Na 3:12). A tree full of leaves normally should have fruit, but this one was cursed because it had none. The fact that the cleansing of the temple (vv. 15–19) is sandwiched between the two parts of the account of the fig tree (vv. 12–14 and vv. 20–25) may underscore the theme of judgment (see note on v. 21). The only application Jesus makes, however, is as an illustration of believing prayer (vv. 21–25). (CSB)

11:12–14 The curse and destruction of the fig tree warns Jesus' disciples of impending judgment against the temple and the unfruitful people. Works without faith are truly fruitless. True faith, and the life that flows from it, cannot be separated. They are the good and gracious gifts of our heavenly Father. • “In your hearts enthrone Him; There let Him subdue All that is not holy, All that is not true; Crown Him as your captain In temptation's hour; Let His will enfold you In its light and pow'r.” Amen. (LSB 512:5) (TLSB)

11:15–19 All three Synoptic writers mention a cleansing of the temple at the end of Jesus' ministry. Only John has one at the beginning. (CSB)

11:15–19 Mk places the cleansing of the temple in the midst of the story of the unproductive fig tree to connect them. Like a fig tree with leaves, the temple compound was full of activity. Fruit should have been present, but both tree and temple were barren. (TLSB)

11:15 *the temple.* The court of the Gentiles, the only part of the temple in which Gentiles could worship God and gather for prayer (see v. 17). (CSB)

sold and bought. Pilgrims coming to the Passover Feast needed animals that met the ritual requirements for sacrifice, and the vendors set up their animal pens and money tables in the court of the Gentiles. (CSB)

the tables of the money changers. Pilgrims needed their money changed into the local currency because the annual temple tax had to be paid in that currency. Also, the Mishnah (see note on Mt 15:2) required Tyrian currency for some offerings. (CSB)

those selling doves. Doves were required for the purification of women (Lev 12:6; Lk 2:22–24), the cleansing of those with certain skin diseases (Lev 14:22), and other purposes (Lev 15:14, 29). They were also the usual offering of the poor (Lev 5:7). (CSB)

11:16 *to carry anything through the temple.* A detail found only in Mark. Apparently the temple area was being used as a shortcut between the city and the Mount of Olives. See note on v. 27. (CSB)

Temple precinct was used as a shortcut between the Mount of Olives and Jerusalem. Jerusalem was more or less a center of religious tourism. (TLSB)

11:17 *a house of prayer for all nations.* Isa 56:7 assured godly non-Jews that they would be allowed to worship God in the temple. By allowing the court of the Gentiles to become a noisy, smelly marketplace, the Jewish religious leaders were interfering with God's provision. (CSB)

a den of robbers. Not only because they took financial advantage of the people but because they robbed the temple of its sanctity.(CSB)

11:18 *began seeking a way to destroy him.* They regarded Jesus as a dangerous threat to their whole way of life. (CSB)

feared. They considered Jesus dangerous because the Romans would not tolerate a popular rebellion (cf Jn 11:45–50). (TLSB)

11:19 *went out of the city.* To Bethany. (CSB)

11:15–19 As prophesied in Mal 3:1–5, Jesus purifies the temple of those who use religion to line their pockets. He does so in the temple court, where genuine worship has been disrupted. Today, Jesus challenges us to eliminate all such barriers to God’s Word in our lives and in our congregations. He is the proper focus of our prayers, the reason for our service; He hallows us as the temple of His Holy Spirit. • “Your name be hallowed. Help us, Lord, In purity to keep Your Word, That to the glory of Your name We walk before You free from blame. Let no false teaching us pervert; All poor deluded souls convert.” Amen. (LSB 766:2). (TLSB)

The Withered Fig Tree

20 As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. **21** And Peter remembered and said to him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered.” **22** And Jesus answered them, “**Have faith in God. 23 Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. 24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. 25 And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.**”

11:20 *In the morning.* Tuesday morning of Passion Week. (CSB)

withered away to its roots. This detail indicates that the destruction was total (see Job 18:16) and that no one in the future would eat fruit from the tree. It served as a vivid warning of the judgment to come in A.D. 70. (CSB)

11:21 *Rabbi.* Hebrew word for “(my) teacher.” (CSB)

fig tree you cursed. Doomed to destruction. (TLSB)

has withered. Perhaps prophetic of the fate of the Jewish authorities who were now about to reject their Messiah. (CSB)

11:22–24 Jesus explains that the source of His authority is God, who gives faith and honors prayers spoken in faith. (TLSB)

11:23 *this mountain ... into the sea.* The Mount of Olives, from which the Dead Sea is visible. (CSB)

11:25 *stand praying.* Jewish posture for prayer. (TLSB)

forgive. Jesus transitions to mention the greatest petition for one praying: the forgiveness of sins. Refusing to forgive forfeits forgiveness by destroying the relationship between God and the believer. “If you forgive, you have this comfort and assurance, that you are forgiven in heaven. This is not because of your forgiving. For God forgives freely and without condition, out of pure grace, because He has so promised” (LC III 95–96). (TLSB)

may forgive. As forgiven sinners, we are delighted to forgive those who sin against us. (TLSB)

11:26 This verse is not found in the earliest and best manuscripts of the NT, probably having been inserted from Mt 6:15. (CSB)

11:20–26 Jesus teaches that saving faith rescues us from God’s judgment and that, through faith, we have the power to do the work God gives us. Without faith in Jesus, it is impossible to please God or pray to Him. We know God hears our prayers even if we do not receive an answer immediately. Confident prayer, based on faith in Christ crucified and risen, trusts God to answer in His own time and way (cf Rm 8:32). • “Forgive our sins, Lord, we implore, That they may trouble us no more; We, too, will gladly those forgive Who hurt us by the way they live. Help us in our community To serve each other willingly.” Amen. (LSB 766:6). (TLSB)

The Authority of Jesus Questioned

27 And they came again to Jerusalem. And as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him, 28 and they said to him, “By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?” 29 Jesus said to them, “I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. 30 Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me.” 31 And they discussed it with one another, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ 32 But shall we say, ‘From man?’”—they were afraid of the people, for they all held that John really was a prophet. 33 So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

11:27 *temple courts.* Several courts surrounded the main temple buildings, including the court of the women, the court of the men (Israelite), and the court of the Gentiles (see v. 16). (CSB)

the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders. (CSB)

11:28 *authority.* The Sanhedrin was asking why Jesus performed what appeared to be an official act if he possessed no official status. (CSB)

Jesus’ actions in vv 15–16 overturned decisions the temple leaders had made. Their practices were not explicitly forbidden by God’s Law, so they believed they had acted appropriately. (TLSB)

11:29–30 Jesus replied to their question with a question, a common debate strategy. (TLSB)

11:30 *from heaven, or from men?* “Heaven” was a common Jewish term for God, often substituted for the divine name to avoid a possible misuse of it (see Ex 20:7). Jesus’ question implied that his authority, like that of John’s baptism, came from God. (CSB)

11:32 *people ... all held.* The people believed that God sent John. (TLSB)

11:33 *We do not know.* Fear of the people kept them from giving their opinion. (TLSB)

Neither will I tell you. Jesus discredited them by refusing to answer. (TLSB)

11:27–33 Opponents of Jesus confront Him and question His authority. Jesus refuses to engage them since He confidently knows the true character of His authority (Mt 28:18). The anger of these leaders brings Jesus ever nearer to the cross, where He acts in weakness to overthrow the authority of the evil one for the sake of our salvation. • Lord God, heavenly Father, You sent Your Son to cleanse the temple of Jerusalem, so now cleanse the hearts of Your people, that they may be temples for Your Holy Spirit. Amen. (TLSB)