

Dear Heavenly Father,

Praise

Jesus looked directly at the people and said, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone” (Luke 20:17). I praise you today as the God who is building your spiritual house on Jesus Christ, “a cornerstone chosen and precious” (1 Pet 2:6). What an honor to be a living stone in that house, set upon the foundation of your Son and called to be a holy priest in your service! Hallelujah!

Today in Your Word

Today you told me how Jesus cursed the fig tree. I was a bit confused as to Jesus’ motive until I did a little research and discovered that although the main fig harvest was from mid-August to mid-October, the branches of fig trees sprout buds that remain undeveloped throughout the winter. These buds swell into small, green, edible knops known in Hebrew as *paggim* in March–April, followed shortly by the sprouting of leaf buds in April. Thus a fig tree in leaf should at least have some *paggim* in various stages of maturation, even though it wouldn’t have fully ripened figs until later in the season. Jesus saw the fig tree in leaf and expected to find some *paggim* that would satisfy his hunger, but the tree had none. The tree looked like it was bearing fruit (it had leaves), but its appearance masked its barrenness. Jesus, led by the Spirit, saw an opportunity to teach his disciples a memorable lesson, and he cursed the tree, not because it had no fruit, but because it made a show of life that promised fruit, yet was bearing none. In this way the fig tree was a symbol of all who make a show of loving you but are spiritually barren. This is a stern reminder to me of the importance of works, for faith without works (without fruit) is dead (James 2:17). When the disciples discovered the withered tree the next morning, they were amazed at how quickly it had died. Jesus answered them, “Have faith in God...if you have faith and do not doubt... whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.” (Mark 11:22; Matt 21:21–22; cf. John 12:47–49). Jesus was *not* saying that I can have anything I want as long as I really believe, nor did he mean that I will receive immediate answers to all my prayers. Rather, Jesus was calling me to believe and obey your Word. If I act and pray in accord with your Spirit, you will grant my request. I must not doubt, for when I ask something in your name and in harmony with your will, you *will* accomplish your purpose (John 14:12–14). But I must also be patient and wait on your timing, for as Abraham discovered, the time between your promise and your answer may be long indeed (Gen 18:11–14).

Reflection

A study of the various Scriptures on prayer reveals that there are conditions to effective praying. I must not hold a grudge against another person (Mark 11:25), I must not pray with selfish motives (James 4:3), and my requests should always be in harmony with your will (1 John 5:14–15). To pray effectively, *my faith should be in you, not in the object of my request.*

Request

Father, help me to live a life of holiness and careful obedience to your Word (John 15:10). Keep me close to your heart, so my prayers will always be in harmony with your will and your mission.

Thanksgiving

Thank you for the knowledge that salvation is for all who are willing to humble themselves and repent, regardless of their past. Even tax collectors and prostitutes may enter your kingdom (Matt 21:31)!

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Suggested Hymn: “[Have Faith in God](#)” – Daniel W. Whittle.

Meditation Verse: Matthew 21:43.