

# ***Don't Be Like the Fig Tree***

**Scripture:** Matthew 21:18-22  
(03-22-26 Pastor Tony Hao)

In Matthew 21:18-22, Jesus performs one of His most unusual and "perplexing" miracles. Occurring during the final week before His crucifixion, this act is not a "divine temper tantrum" but a vivid, acted parable for His disciples.

When Jesus approaches the fig tree, He finds plenty of leaves but no fruit. In the natural world, fig trees in Israel typically produce fruit before or alongside their leaves; thus, a leafy tree *professes* to have fruit. The tree serves as a symbol for the nation of Israel and its religious leaders, who maintained an outward "facade of goodness" while being spiritually barren.

Religiosity without dependence on Jesus leads to spiritual barrenness. God looks past the "leaves" of external religiosity—church attendance, rituals, and outward talk—to find genuine spiritual fruit: love, joy, and good works.

Genuine abiding faith in Jesus leads to spiritual fruitfulness. True fruit is not produced by human effort but by "remaining in Jesus". Just as a branch cannot bear fruit by itself, we cannot produce spiritual fruit apart from Christ. When we are closely connected to God, our desires begin to align with His will, making our prayers effective and powerful.

## **GROWING DEEPER (Reflection & Application)**

1. The fig tree had leaves, which usually promised fruit was present. How do we sometimes "show leaves" (religious activities) in our lives without having "fruit" (genuine character and obedience)?
2. Why is it so easy to focus on what others think of our faith rather than our actual internal relationship with the Lord?
3. If Jesus examined your "worship life" today—your work, your relationships, and your private habits—what would He find to be the most "fruitful" part? What part might be just "leaves"?
4. What is one practical step you can take this week to "abide in the vine" and ensure your actions align with your profession of faith?