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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A2017 ~ The Barren Fig Tree.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

Today's *Bible Adventure* is about expectations, what we think might happen and what we hope will happen.

Over the past 50 years, there've been times when young people have grown tired of the relentless pace of city life. They've decided to move to the country for a quieter life but once there, have found themselves without the city conveniences they were used to. They had to learn to live with the dust of unsealed roads, bad smells from animals and taking their own garbage to the dump. Their expectations of country life didn't match up to what they had originally hoped for.

God too has expectations of people. He set the nation of Israel to be a holy example to all the nations of the world. And they failed to do the task. But before we get too critical of Israel's failings, we need to admit that we often fail too. Today's drama starts as the Lord Jesus was riding upon an unbroken donkey towards the Eastern Gate of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

DRAMA - [The Bible In Living Sound](#).

The story of the barren fig tree is given in Matthew, Chapter 21 and Mark, Chapter 11. During this last week for the Lord Jesus before He died, Jesus spent His daytimes in Jerusalem and returned to Bethany each night. On the way into Jerusalem the morning after His triumphal entry on a donkey, Jesus saw a fig tree which had no fruit. He found nothing but leaves, as it wasn't the right season for figs. But Jesus cursed the fig tree and according to Matthew's Gospel, the fig tree immediately withered.

Why did Jesus do such a thing? During His ministry, Jesus used many parables or stories to help people understand what He was saying. The cursing of the fig tree was a visual illustration of what was about to happen to Israel. It was a warning to the Jews. The Old Testament prophets of Jeremiah and Micah often compared Israel with a fig tree. From a distance, Israel looked good, just like a fig tree covered with leaves. But when one looked closely, there was no 'fruit' of righteousness to be seen. From that time forward, no one would ever obtain blessing from Israel again. God planned Israel to be a light and blessing to the nations of the world. But it had become spiritually dead, with no spiritual fruit to nourish the souls of other nations and point them to God. Israel in effect had become just like a barren fig tree. Forty years later, God's judgment fell on Jerusalem – in 70 AD, it was totally destroyed by the Roman army.

Many who call themselves Christians can also look like a barren fig tree. Their lives might look active and helpful to others from a distance. But when people get to know them better, there may be no true spiritual fruit in their lives at all.

On the following morning when Jesus and the disciples were travelling to Jerusalem, they all saw again the withered fig tree. Peter was amazed that at the word of the Lord, the tree had withered from its roots up. Jesus then used the withered fig tree example to teach a further important lesson to the disciples. He said that if anyone has faith, whatever the person asks for will be done. God can do anything if we just pray in faith.

Jesus didn't mean we can pray for anything we want and God will do it. Certain conditions must be met for our requests to be granted. At the start, we must pray in faith, believing that God is Who He said He is and that nothing is impossible with Him. Without faith that God can answer, prayer ends up achieving very little. Secondly, we need also to pray according to God's will and not to oppose His purposes. Our prayers should always be prayed in Jesus' name and for His sake, not for our own sake.

If we want God to answer our prayers, we must forgive others and then learn to love them. We must also remain in Christ's Spirit and His words of truth in the Bible remain in us. This means that we are in His love, under His authority and obedient to His will. Jesus must be the Lord of all our life.

Do you have any expectations about God? Many people expect that God should always take care of them and never let any hurt or harm of any type come near them. This includes natural tragedies, or disasters in their family or community. When they see other Christians suffering in some way, they start to doubt that God's promises are faithful and true. In Psalm 91 God has given a group of protection promises. Some people learn the words off by heart and repeat them over and over in times of physical danger.

We have to ask ourselves if it is always God's will to protect a human body from harm. The Lord Jesus' body was not spared so that by His death all those who trust in Him might have their sins paid for. His disciples' lives were not spared either. Do we want physical protection more than God's plan for our lives? As Christians we know that we may be called upon to suffer for Christ in some way. In Romans Chapter 8 the Apostle Paul says: "There is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord."

We live in a world that's deeply damaged by sin and its consequences. One pastor believed that God doesn't engineer what we say are 'tragedies' or 'disasters' but that they happen as the consequences of sin, or a lack of understanding and carelessness. Such is God's skill at turning tragedy to triumph and loss into gain for those who have experienced a tragedy that they sometimes think that He caused it. The reality is: God brings good out of evil.

Often disappointment and grief teach people a great deal. God follows His own people in goodness, love and mercy. In Psalm 23, it says: "Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life."

So now we have to ask: What does God expect of me as a believer in Jesus Christ? Commitment to God's ways among those professing to be Christians is very low in this generation. The statistical difference between the way the average unbeliever lives and the average Christian lives is often quite small. Both groups divorce at the same rate and cheat on their taxes about the same as well. The attitude of many Christians is that they want to be ministered to and not go out there to help those less fortunate than themselves.

Why aren't Christians more interested in the things of the Kingdom of Heaven or giving themselves to serving the Lord, irrespective of what rewards await them in heaven? A lot of the world lives in a technology age that has many distractions to use up our valuable personal time. It's easy to overlook the small things in life. If a person isn't looking for God's kingdom, which is unseen, they will probably miss it. Spiritual growth must be developed through personal Bible study and prayer, which are things others won't see us doing.

God's kingdom is so great we cannot afford to take it lightly. There are high expectations placed upon those who seek to enter in. Some ask if God's expectations are too high for us. Are we like some university students? Instead of working hard at their studies, these young people expect themselves to be successful without doing the work. Yet life normally doesn't work that way. Our attitude of reverence and awe towards God should make us want to live to please Him in everything that we do. In short, self-interests and selfish ambition have to be sacrificed at the foot of the cross, even daily if need be.

The apostle Paul in Philippians, Chapter 3, said, "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ." The kingdom of God is so valuable that it's completely beyond our ability to understand it. In 1 Corinthians, Chapter 2, it says: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him."

No person, position or possession is more valuable than being in God's kingdom. You may not be asked to give up everything on this earth to follow Jesus, but you must be willing to and whenever asked. The story is told of a theological college student who didn't want to go to one place in the world to serve God. Yet he said he was prepared to go to anywhere else. The student struggled with this call for many months, before he finally surrendered his life completely over to God and said he was willing to go anywhere in the world, including that place. As soon as the student had settled God's sovereignty in his heart, he experienced total peace.

At the end of his course, this student graduated and took the job teaching other students. Yet God had wanted him to be willing to go anywhere with the Gospel. Is there anything in your life you are unwilling to give up if God asked you to? If there is, you need to confess this to God as sin and ask for His forgiveness and cleansing. You also need to ask Jesus to help you be released from the hold that this resistance has on your life, so that you can truly give Him first place. Dying to oneself is a difficult and painful process, yet the life Jesus offers far outweighs the effort to continually give up our fleshly and worldly desires. It's time to stop taking your commitment to Christ lightly and to sacrifice all you have and are for extending God's kingdom.

God commands us to be holy. In 1 Peter, Chapter 1, it says: "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'" Only by the grace of God does a person have the power to rise above his sinful nature and we begin to live a life pleasing to the Lord. As we press closer to knowing God, we gain a deeper relationship with Him.

God's power is also to be used in the service of others. In Galatians, Chapter 6, Paul says: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ." Because God commands us to use His power to serve others, we should not be surprised that a life of service is essential to a spiritually productive one too. If you don't use God's power to serve the needs of others, you will lose that power in your own life.

It's time to start taking your relationship to Jesus seriously, sacrificing all you are and have for God's kingdom, seeking after His holiness in your life, and serving the needs of others, because that's what God expects of us.

In Isaiah, Chapter 30, Verse 18c it says: "Happy are those who put their trust in the Lord."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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