

Introduction

1. We all know what this is. ([Show EKG reading](#))¹ Health pros determine heart health w/EKG.
 - a. They know a healthy functioning heart is one of our chief vital signs. ([Show](#))²
 - b. If heart is healthy, good sign the whole body is likely to be healthy. ([Show](#))³
2. Bible teaches are spiritual vital signs. Indicators of healthy spiritual heart.
 - a. It was these vital signs that Jesus came looking for in the nation Israel. Mark 11:11.
 - b. Last thing Jesus did on Palm Sunday was go into the temple and look around.
 - i. Was look of examination. Jesus was analyzing spiritual vital signs of the Jews.
 - ii. Temple = heart of spiritual life of Jews. Its condition revealed their condition.
 - c. Bible says we = temple of the Lord. What happens in our temple shows our condition.
3. ([Show Title & Text.](#)) ***We can test our spiritual health by analyzing our spiritual vital signs.***

I. Fruitfulness, vv. 12-14.

A. Fig Tree

1. Time of the year was Passover (mid-April). Fig trees in Palestine have this cycle:
 - a. Produce small edible buds in March. Large green leaves appear in early April.
 - b. Eventually buds drop off when regular figs ripened in late May or June.
 - c. Early buds were common food for people. Absence indicated no fruit that year.
2. Even tho not season for figs, reasonable for Jesus to find edible buds on the tree.
3. Bertrand Russell, famous atheist, used this as one of reasons not a Christian.
 - a. Wrote book entitled *Why I am Not A Christian*.⁵ This episode = Jesus' petulance.
 - b. Jesus can't obtain food so becomes bad-tempered and sulks, cursing the tree.
 - c. What a sinner Jesus is for lashing out at the fig tree! Bad Jesus.
 - d. (BTW, most attacks on the Bible are the result of ignorance just like this.)
 - e. I used to hear my professors attack the Bible; they only showed lack of knowledge.

B. Meaning

1. This was an acted parable – an illustrated lesson, if you will, by Jesus.
2. Fig tree = symbol of Israel (Jer. 8:13; Hosea 9:10, 16). ([Show](#))⁶
 - a. Like tree, Israel had very impressive leaves.
 - i. A magnificent temple, elaborate ceremonies, lots of sacrifices & offerings.
 - ii. Impressive priesthood. Ancient O.T. book filled with amazing miracles.
 - b. Underneath big, shiny leaves, no real fruit. Spiritually, Israel was barren/sterile.
 - c. No vital, godly relationship on the inside; no true righteousness on the outside.
 - d. As fig tree cursed, so Israel cursed. Be judged & dry up spiritually in 70 A.D.
 - e. Roman Gen. Titus destroy temple, scatter nation, put end to bankrupt religion.

¹ <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/fd/cb/75/fdcb7554b6818b8767aa6a19f8ea4436.jpg>. Accessed 6/15/17.

² <http://sveccs.org/sites/site-4125/images/Screen%20Shot%202014-09-07%20at%205.30.36%20PM.png>. 6/15/17.

³ http://www.harvestgranger.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/2010-08-29_VITAL-SIGNS_title.jpg. 6/15/17.

⁴ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). Mark. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, Vol. 2, p. 157.

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Why_I_Am_Not_a_Christian. Accessed 5/12/17.

⁶ Fig Trees in Israel. http://www.kkl-jnf.org/files/Tourism_and_Recreation/hiking-walking/Sheizaf/1.jpg. 6/15/17.

C. Application

1. Healthy trees produce fruit; healthy spiritual lives do too.
 - a. We can do lots of things that look good, but if no fruit they are nothing but leaves.
 - b. Very 1st command in the Bible = *Be fruitful...subdue* [the earth], Gen. 1:28.
 - c. God wanted a productive life in fellowship w/Him accomplishing His purposes.
2. **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A FRUITFUL CHRISTIAN?** ([Show](#))⁷
 - a. ***Fruitful trees have a good root system, v. 20.***
 - i. Notice the next day *they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots.*
 - ii. It dried up from the roots and would never produce fruit again.
 - iii. Jesus Christ = our root system. Bible speaks of being *rooted...in him*, Col.2:7.
 - iv. John 15:5. Only He can enable us to produce true spiritual fruit.
 - v. Only if you know Him as your personal Savior can you be spiritually fruitful.
 - b. ***Fruitful trees grow, Philippians 3:10. (Best verse on Christian growth.)*** ([Show](#))⁸
 - i. We grow in our experience of Christ by getting to know Him better.
 - ii. This is a life-transforming knowledge resulting in the power of his resurrection.
 - iii. We grow when we share his sufferings which refine and deepen us.
 - iv. We grow by self-denial, *becoming like him in his death.* Putting Christ 1st.
 - c. ***Fruitful trees produce food for others, v. 13.***
 - i. This was the problem with impressive religion of Israel.
 - ii. Rather than leading people to their Messiah, they were hindering them.
 - iii. Fruitful Christians are engaged in some way in helping others to the Messiah.
3. Do these 3 qualities describe your life, mine? If so, we will be fruitful. If not, won't.
4. That simple. Spiritual vitality leads to fruitfulness. One of the signs Jesus looks for.

II. Realness, vv. 15-19. (Noun that means something is for real, not fake/false)

- A. **Why Was Jesus So Angry?** (Not selfish anger, but righteous indignation, God's anger.)
 1. Jesus went into court of the Gentiles (300yrds by 250yrds). ([Show Temple Model](#))⁹
 2. Jewish leaders were using it for 3 purposes:
 - a. ***Money exchange***
 - i. All males 20yrs + had to pay annual Temple tax in Jewish currency.
 - ii. Priests charging 11% exchange fee. Know what call that? Loan sharking.
 - iii. Taking advantage of people supposed be serving, all in name of religion.
 - b. ***Livestock exchange***
 - i. Over 250,000 lambs for Passover in AD66.¹⁰ Normally sold on Mt of Olives.
 - ii. High Priest, Caiaphas, wanted get in on action. Set up competition in Temple.
 - iii. Imagine how smelly, noisy, chaotic Court of the Gentiles would've been?
 - c. ***Traffic exchange***

⁷ <https://www.gotquestions.org/img/OG/fruitful-Christian.jpg>. 6/16/17.

⁸ <http://cdn.knowing-jesus.com/wp-content/uploads/Philippians-3-10-That-I-May-Know-Him-gold-copy.jpg>. 6/16/17.

⁹ https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5e/Second_Temple_view.jpg. 6/15/17.

¹⁰ Figures are from Josephus, from Grant Osborn's class notes on the Gospel of Mark, p. 41.

- i. Jewish Talmud said could not use the Temple as a short-cut thru Jerusalem.
- ii. But people like short-cuts, don't they? Trampled thru carrying wares/products.
- iii. Instead of place for worship, became like a busy, bustling street corner.
- d. No wonder Jesus angry! 2nd cleansing. Not one thing had changed.
- e. Almost 4yrs of the ministry of the Son of God, and nothing had changed spiritually.

B. WHAT IS REAL SPIRITUALITY, MARK 11:17?

1. Did you know cleansing the Temple was a Messianic sign? Jesus fulfilling O.T.
 - a. Jesus combines Jer. 7:10-11 ([Show](#)),¹¹ & Isa. 56:7 ([Show](#)),¹² to show Messiah clean up.
 - b. He'd judge Jews who desecrated God's worship & He'd draw Gentiles to believe.
 2. Jesus drew from these O.T. verses two phrases that = authentic, real spirituality.
- ① **HOUSE OF PRAYER: A DEEP CONCERN TO GIVE GOD WORSHIP & OBEDIENCE THAT HONORS HIM.**
- a. A house of prayer = holy place to meet God. Priests had made it a *den of thieves*.
 - b. Den = place where thieves go to hide. Were using temple to hide self-indulgence.
 - c. But real spirituality involves a deep concern to bring honor to God.
 - d. Our worship must be authentic and from the heart. When we hear the Holy Word read, our hearts should stand at attention and we should attempt to absorb every syllable. When we pray, we should piggy-back the prayers of the one praying with our silent and verbal "amens," "yes, Lord's" and "hallelujahs." There must be in all of this a willingness to devote our will to God's service.¹³
 - e. All of this spills over into an earnest desire to live right in God's eyes.
 - f. Share letter written to Montgomery Wards by a thief who was converted to Jesus.¹⁴
- ② **FOR ALL NATIONS: A DEEP CONCERN FOR LOST PEOPLE TO COME TO KNOW GOD THRU JESUS.**
- a. God wanted the Temple to be a place Gentiles could find Him as well as Jews.
 - b. By turning into a 3-ring-circus, priests showing callous indifference to the lost.
 - c. Authentic spirituality involves a deep concern for the lost.
 - i. Many years ago I saw Pastor Bill Hybels interviewed by Peter Jennings of ABC.
 - ii. As Hybels talked about his concern for the lost, there were tears in his eyes.
 - iii. As I saw those tears, I thot, *He really cares about reaching lost people.*
 - d. About 10yrs ago our church faced very important decision. Should have VBS or not?
 - i. It's a lot of work; it takes a lot of volunteers; we held it August when people traveling.
 - ii. Decided to have; moved to June; rest is history. Most preregistrations ever this yr.
 - iii. When that decision was made many years ago, I quietly rejoiced. I was so glad.
 - iv. Some of the best Christians I know were converted thru a VBS.
 - v. A church that no longer cares to reach its children has lost true spirituality.
 - vi. But where there is a healthy spiritual condition, reaching lost'll always be primary.
 - e. ***We can test our spiritual health by analyzing our spiritual vital signs. Fruitful, Real***

¹¹ Jeremiah 7:10-11. http://images.slideplayer.com/14/4444063/slides/slide_37.jpg. 6/15/17.

¹² Isaiah 56:7. <https://image.slidesharecdn.com/04062014slides-140403082910-phpapp01/95/jesus-cleanses-the-temple-18-638.jpg?cb=1396513832>. 6/15/17.

¹³ Hughes, R. K. (1989). *Mark: Jesus, servant and savior*. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, Vol. 2, p. 90.

¹⁴ Personal Illustrations, *Forgiveness, Montgomery Wards*.