

September 20, 2015

INTRO:

*Achilles is a famous mythological warrior who has his own idiom as well as a tendon named after him.

*An "Achilles' heel is an idiom for the one place where a person is most vulnerable.

*But the story of Achilles is bigger than his famous weak spot.

*As the story goes Achilles was offered a choice...an early, heroic death or a long and unremarkable life.

*He chose a hero's death, though he favored returning home and living his life.

If I remain here and wage war against the city of Troy,
I will never survive to go home, but my fame will be immortal.
Yet if I leave here to return to my dear homeland,
I shall have no noble fame, but my life will be long
and the end of death will not reach me quickly. (Iliad 9.410-416)

*In the legend, a heroic, violent death was given precedent over a long and peaceful life.

*True glory for Homer, the author of the Iliad is being remembered by others...to be the subject of songs long after you are dead...in our day it would translate into going viral on YouTube.

*Years ago some young body builders were asked..."If you could be guaranteed a world championship and all the resulting fame but would die shortly after would you take it?"

*A majority answered "yes"

*This was an "Achilles question"...die young and famous, or live long in obscurity.

***So...can we aspire for greatness without becoming fools in the process?**

***Has God put it in our hearts to want to be "heroic" and to have a passion for impact?**

***Or has sin put it there?**

Mark 11:1 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, 2 saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 3 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'" 4 They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, 5 some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" 6 They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. 7 When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. 8 Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. 9 Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "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 Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He

looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

1. Jesus entered Jerusalem like a King.

*As Jesus rode into the City of The King...the People were shouting "God save us now!" (Hosanna!)

*They were spreading their cloaks on the road along with palm branches...he is literally getting the "royal treatment."

*This type of parade was normal for a king, but Jesus did something out of the ordinary for a king.

*He did not ride in on warhorse; he rode on a young, donkey.

*The great WWII General George Patton believed himself to be a reincarnated warrior of old.

*He loved large, powerful horses...when he had the chance he rode one...and the bigger, more powerful the horse the better.

*Imagine him riding victorious into Germany on small donkey...no way...he was way to important for that.

*His vision of greatness would never have allowed it.

*Yet the King of the Universe rode into the town of his death on a young donkey.

*This was foretold...long before.

Zech. 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

*He was a king but he did not fit into the world's categories of Kingship.

*He was majesty and meekness in one person.

*John said in Revelation...look for the Lion and you will see the Lamb.

Rev. 5:5 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." 6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain,

*Jesus is:

*Infinite majesty- infinite humility

*So, the King rides into the city of the Kings in humility.

*He does a quick site visit to the temple...but he only looks around and then leaves.

*He will return the next day to take appropriate action.

2. The King Cleans House

12 The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. 13 Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. 14 Then he said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard him say it. 15 On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, 16 and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. 17 And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations"? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"

*First century historian Josephus wrote that in one week 255,000 lambs were bought, sold and sacrificed in the Temple courts.

*This made for a noisy, dirty, smelly place.

*All this mess was going on in the one place where non-Jews, Gentiles were allowed to come and seek God.

*It was large place; the court of the Gentiles was several acres in area.

*But this was supposed to be the place where all people could come and seek God...imagine trying to even hear yourself think let alone hear God speak to you about your life and need for him.

*Jesus had spent the night a few miles from Jerusalem in the town of Bethany.

*On the way back to the Temple he saw a fig tree in full leaf.

*He went to see if it had any fruit...even though it was not the season for harvesting figs.

*Fig trees produce two crops each year...the first crop is called the breba crop and occurs early in the year on the previous years growth.

*These are not always great for eating...but they are edible.

*The normal figs come in later in the year.

*When the first crop is missing the tree is likely in trouble...probably sick.

*Jesus goes to the tree, in full leaf with none of the early fruit.

*He then pronounces a "curse on the tree"

*This bothers some people...it looks like the Lord is being moody, cranky...using his powers to curse an innocent tree seems petty.

*This tree will be dead by the next day...but the fact is it was probably dead already...it just didn't know it yet.

*Full of leaves...the appearance of life...but dying.

*The Lord, for his own purposes, sped up the natural process...he used this tree as an illustration for what the larger issues of the people of God.

*They too looked to be alive in all their busy activity...but they were without the real fruit that revealed relationship with God.

*He reentered the temple area and this time he began driving out those who were buying and selling animals and changing Roman currency into local currency (and ripping people off in the process).

*Okay...so now, some might say...first he loses his temper with a tree, now with people doing business.

*Not what happened...he didn't get mad at trees...he used the tree for his purpose...it was his tree to use...the earth is the Lord's.

*That tree got a really good deal...how many fig trees in world history made it into the Bible and are still being discussed today.

*The tree had a purpose...it lived that purpose.

*But the tree served as a living and dying example...it looked alive, but was dying and would soon be dead...it had no fruit.

*He is not losing his cool here in the temple...he is making a powerful gospel point.

*Remember the day before...he entered the temple area...looked around...saw the crazy stuff going on...but didn't do anything.

*He left for the night and went to his place of rest.

*The next day he returns and goes into planned and controlled action.

*He doesn't punch people in the mouth...he does take control of the temple area and exercise his rightful authority there...he is in charge.

***Two important considerations here:**

1. What he says: "My house will be called a place of prayer for all nations...you have made it a den of robbers."

*From Is. 56:7 & Jer. 7:11

*The Jews were to be God's people who would carry the reality of the true God to all people.

*Here in the one place where non-Jews were allowed to come and seek God...it was a noisy mess.

*No way people could pray here...no way people see the gospel behind the symbols.

*Jesus is not reacting against commercialization.

*Jesus is overturning the sacrificial system and opening the way into the presence of God for everyone.

*The Jewish people had not been faithful to make the path to God open and clear.

*Just as the fig tree did not do its job.

*In the same way Israel...and in fact all those who claim to be God's people but do not bear fruit did not and do not live their purpose.

*The temple was very busy, lots of activity...but the busyness was emptiness...void of the reality of God.

*Nobody was actually praying, going to God for forgiveness, begging for mercy...it had turned into a sort of religious version of county fair.

*The reality of God was forgotten, buried under the noise and mess of all the useless activity.

*The sacrificial system, the Temple were designed to point to the Gospel...instead they were made into barriers.

*The courtyard was a busy place, lots of people, lots of activity, lots of religious talk and images...animals shedding their blood to symbolize the cost of sin...

*Yet, people were not turning to God in repentance for the forgiveness of their sins.

2. Second, what he does.

*He exercises his authority.

*There were thousands of people...no doubt many hardened people, tough people.

*Yet he is able to have his way with them...no one even tries to fight back or stop him.

*How did Jesus get away with this?

*He took authority over the people and the circumstances here...just like he did over disease, demons, and death, weather, and sin.

3. The Plot Against the King

18 The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching. 19 When evening came, they went out of the city. 20 In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. 21 Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!"

*The third act in this narrative shows the leaders of the Jewish people plotting to kill Jesus.

*Mark says...they began to plot to kill him, **because** they feared him, **because** the crowd was amazed at him.

*They were likely afraid on many levels:

- Afraid of Jesus leading to a public disturbance that would provoke the Romans against them.
- Afraid of losing their grip on people that allowed them to maintain their status.

*But although they were wrong in the plot to kill Jesus at least they saw him as a threat...a dangerous person.

*This is closer to fact than those who perceive him as "a lightweight"...a teacher of love but of little consequence and certainly not someone to be "feared."

*He was and is dangerous...the crowds in the Temple did not mess with him...he had his way with them.

*That evening they again left the city and the next morning they are walking Peter notices that the fig tree is now completely dead...down to the roots.

*The picture of judgment is complete...the temple and its sacrificial systems are as doomed as this tree.

CONCLUSION:

*Jesus wants more than busyness, activity from us...he wants the kind of character change that accompanies a life that has been ransomed.

*I said last week that our small groups are not primarily about "in-depth" Bible study.

*They are about..."life transformation"

*These two things are not in opposition to one another...of course Bible study does not contradict life transformation.

*But Bible study itself does not guarantee it either.

*Listen to what Jesus said...

John 5:39 You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

*The people Jesus encountered in his ministry that he had the least tolerance for were the ones with the greatest amount of knowledge without the corresponding life change.

*I'm confident Satan could get straight "A"s in seminary...pass any theological written test...write a doctrinally correct research paper on the Atonement of Christ.

*What guarantees life change is "in-depth Bible application" down to the heart level.

*Jesus said "If you hold to my commandments...then you will know the truth...and experience its freedom."

*Hold to (a commitment to obey) actually precedes real knowledge and ultimate transformation (fruit).

*The fig tree as well as the people of God in this narrative were void of fruit.

*The tree had leaves...but it was barren...fruitless.

*The people too were fruitless.

APPLICATION:

*A fruitless tree and a fruitless approach to God are on display in this narrative today.

*The gospel should produce fruit in our lives.

John 15:16 "you did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last."

*Change is the norm for the Christ follower...and our change is specific...into the image of Christ.

*Like Achilles...Christ died young but his death was not considered a heroic one at the time...it was considered to be full of shame.

Heb. 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

*The hero's death was supposed to be the opposite of shame.

*Yet Christ bore our shame on the cross...

*But he did something unusual with shame...he scorned it.

*He was killed as a criminal, an outcaste, mocked, stripped, beaten, made a spectacle...imagine the shame...public humiliation.

*Yet, imagine this...**he scorned the shame.**

*Shame is what you feel when you are "scorned".

*Scorn is to be seen and treated as nothing, nobody, of little importance.

*Scorn is "you are not worth my time", "You are of no consequence" "You don't matter" "You don't deserve to live."

*Shame is the feeling we have when we experience the scorn (or think we are) of others.

*Look at Jesus...he was able to "Scorn shame"...he shamed shame.

*Very few people will ever have a situation in which they will make an "Achilles'" choice...give up old age to die a young heroic death.

*But many live with an "Achilles'" perspective.

*EITHER I will do something truly "great" OR I will live a boring, useless, unmemorable life.

*Shame is a powerful factors in many lives..."I must be somebody...because I feel like nobody" "I must do something great, because I feel like I am nothing."

*When we began I asked..."**Can we aspire for greatness without becoming fools in the process?**

***Has God put it in our hearts to want to be "heroic" and to have a passion for impact?**

***Or has sin put it there?**

***God has put it there...sin often corrupts it.**

*Christ did die a heroic, young death...and scorned the perception of shame that came from a death on the Cross.

*One of the fruits of the gospel in our lives is that we too can scorn shame.

*When we escape the negative pull of shame we can pursue "greatness" without the corresponding folly.

*Greatness is being faithful with our stewardship.

*God sets the stewardship...but there is nothing inherently wrong with a desire to make a great contribution, a large impact....it is a good thing...a good desire.

*Escaping the negative pull of shame does not mean it goes away, or that we do not feel its pull at all...it means it has lost its corruptive power and influence.

*We do not have to be driven by shame into folly.

*Because of the gospel even shame has redemptive power.

*How is this so?

*Let me explain with a story.

*Last week I thought I had given someone some bad professional advice in my role as a military advisor.

*As I read an email that seemed to expose my mistake...I felt my face redden, my temperature rise...excuses starting to form in mind.... telltale signs of shame.

*But, thanks be to God, I had been reading and thinking about shame and the gospel.

*And here's the redemptive power of shame...God uses it to show us what are idols are...so we can repent of them and be free.

*I began to consider why I felt shame about this?

*Did I think I was unable to make mistakes? Have to be or look perfect?

*Did I care too much of what others thought of me? Afraid to look foolish?

*Did I need to believe I had control of outcomes? Afraid of being incompetent?

*The answer was "yes" to all that and more.

*Shame...which is often corruptive, became redemptive...it exposed idols in my heart...

*I had a choice...the corruptive pull of shame, or the redemptive response to shame.

*Thanks be to God on that day...I repented, turned my heart back to God.

*I had some sorrow that my actions might have had a negative impact on someone else...that is not sin, or shame, or an idol...that is just plain old sorrow.

*But I had much more than that...I had shame...it was the shame that exposed me and allowed me to turn to God in deeper ways.

*In case you are wondering...the situation turned out fine...not a big deal at all.

*But the fact is...Shame had backfired...it revealed my idol and the pathway(repentance) to deeper relationship with God.

*The right mentality does not come from the Iliad and it is not an Achilles' choice...it comes from the Scriptures and it is Paul's choice...

***Phil. 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.**

*Achilles choice was "lose/lose"

-Die young and famous...but the memory of your fame will fade...so in the end, you "lose"

OR

-Live long and useless...in the end, "lose"

*Paul's choice is "Win/Win"

-Live my life...for the glory of Christ..."win"

OR

-Die and experience the glory of Christ..."win"

***I would love to be done forever with the feeling of shame or the choices that can lead to shame...I would like to never again feel the heat on my neck of embarrassment, or the increased pulse rate of the fear of exposure.**

*Its not likely to happen in this life...not completely at least...but I have expectation of forward movement...change, growth.

*I am also learning to not fear shame...but rather to use it to my advantage...it is a spotlight on idols hiding in the dark.

*I am free in Christ to repent of those idols and return over and over to the freedom that comes from him.

*Because of the gospel we are done with fruitless sacrifices and systems, fruitless attempts to bear and cover our own shame.

*We are free to bear fruit for God that lasts...this is real freedom...and it is ours in Christ.

*One of the powerful fruits of the Gospel in our lives...shame has lost its ability to drag us down.

*How much of what you do, think, say...or don't attempt, don't believe, don't say...has shame driving it?

*Shame becomes the lens that distorts how we see everything.

*Do you understand how God wants to use shame...whatever its source...to reveal idols...and to help you become free?

SMALL GROUP NOTES

Mark 11:1-21

Intro:

*Discuss dreams you have or have had?

-Have you "grown out of some of them"?

-Have you become "afraid or suspicious of them"?

-Have you obtained them?

-Were (are) any part of your dreams driven by sin or vanity?

-What part was not sin or vanity, but "service" or "provision" or "impact" or some other position contribution?

*Has shame played a role in either driving you to achieve or holding you back from trying?

Read/Discuss

Mark 11:1 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, 2 saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 3 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'" 4 They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, 5 some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" 6 They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. 7 When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. 8 Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. 9 Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "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 Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

Rev. 5:5 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." 6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain,

1. Consider the contrasts of Jesus:

-Infinite majesty/Infinite humility

-Infinite power/Infinite meekness

-Sovereignty/Submission

*Can you think of others?

2. In what ways did Jesus act that most human kings would not?

12 The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. **13** Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. **14** Then he said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard him say it. **15** On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, **16** and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. **17** And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: "My house will be

called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"

3. Why do you believe Mark put the fig tree story and the clearing of the temple story together here?

4. What did the fig tree and the sacrificial system have in common?

5. How is Jesus able to "get away with this?" Why don't they run him out of the temple, he's only one man?

18 The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching. 19 When evening came, they went out of the city. 20 In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. 21 Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!"

6. Why did they begin looking for a way to kill Jesus?

7. What does it mean to consider Jesus "dangerous?"

8. Why would most people be unlikely to consider him such?

9. Can you think of instances in history when he has proven dangerous for political systems, criminal networks, etc.?

*For instance in 19th century Britain Jesus proved to be dangerous for slavery and the livelihoods of many slaver traders and owners.

10. Read the following:

John 5:39 You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

* Apply this passage to your life, or to your small group? How does this inform the purpose of Bible study?

11. Read the following:

John 15:16 "you did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last."

*The gospel should produce fruit in our lives...what might it mean if fruit is not evident in our lives?

12. Jesus "scorned shame" (Heb 12:2)...what are some implications of that fact for your life?

Apply:

*Shame's redemptive power is the ability to expose idols. We can repent of our idolatry and become free.

*Explore ways you have felt or experienced shame recently...what idols might that shame be highlighting?

*Spend some time confessing.

THE GOSPEL OF

MARK

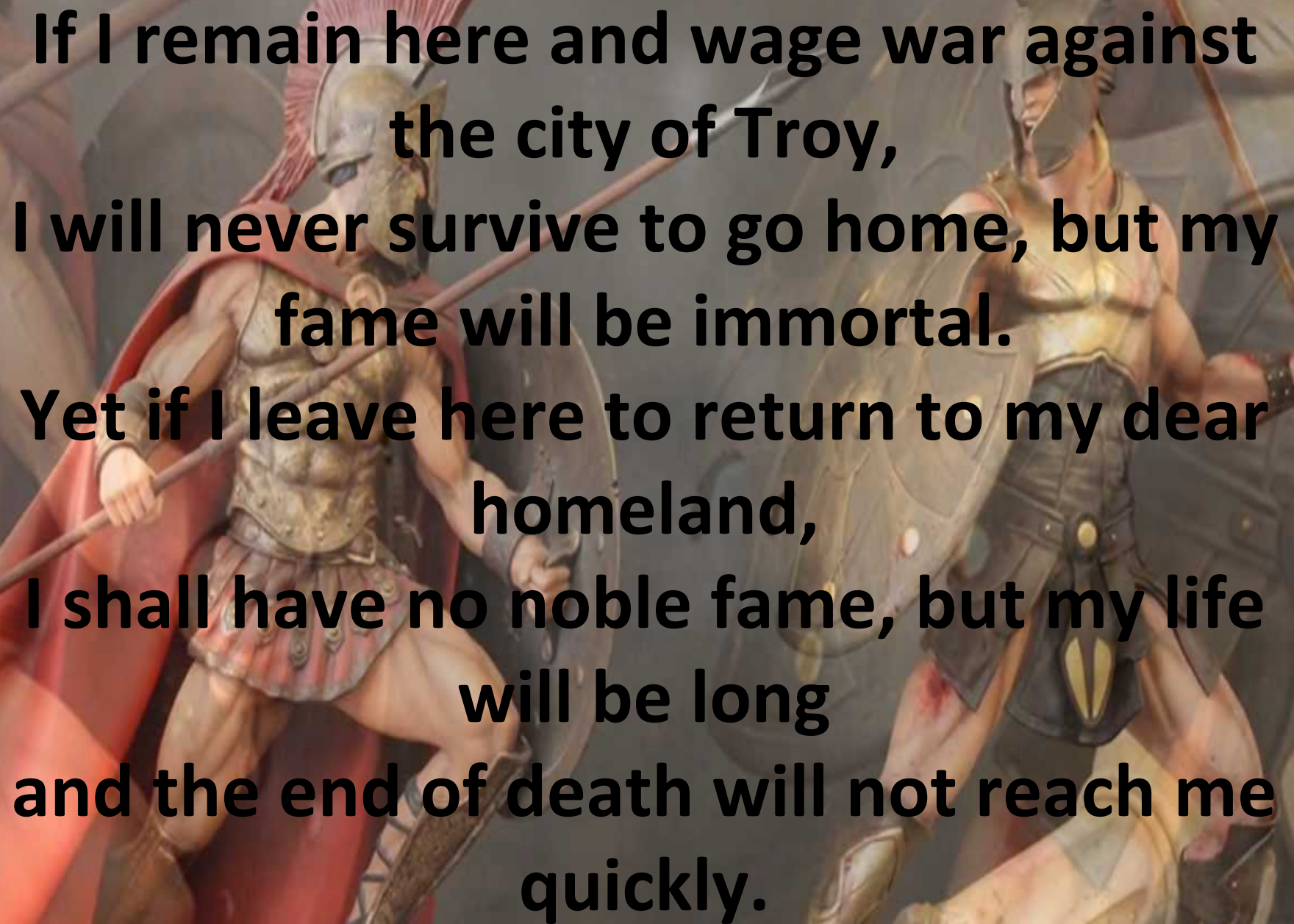


Mark 11:1-21

**“FOR EVEN THE
SON OF MAN
DID NOT COME
TO BE SERVED,
BUT TO SERVE,
AND TO GIVE
HIS LIFE AS A
RANSOM FOR
MANY.”**

MARK 10:45

J. STILL

The background of the image shows two Greek warriors in a battle scene. The warrior on the left is wearing a red cape and a helmet with a red plume, holding a spear and a shield. The warrior on the right is wearing a dark, ornate tunic and a helmet, also holding a spear and a shield. The scene is set in a hazy, battle-torn environment.

**If I remain here and wage war against
the city of Troy,
I will never survive to go home, but my
fame will be immortal.
Yet if I leave here to return to my dear
homeland,
I shall have no noble fame, but my life
will be long
and the end of death will not reach me
quickly.**

(Iliad 9.410-416)

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1. Jesus Enters Like a King



**"Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion!
Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your
king comes to you, righteous and having
salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey."**

Zechariah 9:9

Rev. 5:5-6 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain,

"look for the Lion...see the Lamb"

"Infinite Majesty...Infinite Humility"

Mark 11:12-17 The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Then he said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard him say it. On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: “‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’”

2. The King Cleans House

Mark 11:18-21 The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching. When evening came, they went out of the city. In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. Peter remembered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!”

3. The Plot Against the King

"Transformation is the Expectation"

John 5:39-40 You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

**"You did not choose me, but I chose you
and appointed you to go and bear fruit--
fruit that will last."**

John 15:16

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:2

Jesus "scorned shame"

**God has put a desire for great impact in
our hearts.**

***Because of the gospel even shame has
redemptive power in our lives.***

Shame reveals idols...

Idolatry can be repented of...

Repentance brings new freedom.

"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Phil. 1:21

