

1 When the Cheering Stopped

2 The World Had Changed

- Some years ago a book was written by a noted American historian (Gene Smith) entitled, When The Cheering Stopped.
- At the end of WWI, President Wilson was an international hero.
- Everywhere there was great spirit of optimism and people actually believed that the last war had been fought and the world had been made safe for democracy.
- On his first visit to Paris after the war Wilson was greeted by cheering mobs.

3 The Man with the Plan

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5 The Reversal

- The euphemism in Europe lasted about a year. Then it gradually began to stop.
- At home Woodrow Wilson ran into opposition in the United States Senate and his League of Nations was not ratified.
- Under the strain of it all the President's health began to break. He suffered a stroke and in the next election his party was defeated.
- So it was that Woodrow Wilson, a man who barely a year earlier had been heralded as the new world Messiah, came to the end of his days a broken and defeated man.

6 George H. W. Bush

- George Herbert Walker Bush served as our 41st President of the United States from (1989–1993).
- After the Liberation of Kuwait, President Bush's approval ratings went through the roof at an 83%.
- However, once the economy went into recession his approval rating tanked at approximately 35% and he lost the election to Bill Clinton.

7 Other Recent Presidents

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9 The Popularity of Jesus

- When Jesus emerged on the public scene he too was an overnight sensation.
- Even when he tried to be alone, people flocked to see him.
- In every city the masses would line the streets as a wave of religious expectation swept the country.
- On "Palm Sunday" leafy palm branches were spread before him with shouts of "Hosanna" and "blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."

10 The Fickle Public

- However the cheering did not last for long.

- Even though the crowds were still large, controversy over his teachings brought criticism—especially from the religious leaders of Israel.
- Soon the opposition began to snowball and some very important people wanted to kill Jesus.
- And when they got their chance they did—nailing him to a cross.

11 Root Causes

- Why did those who so thoroughly enjoyed Jesus and His ministry, turn on Him and join the jealous leaders of Israel who had him killed.
- Why did the cheering stop!
- Let's take a look at the possibilities.

12 The Possibilities

- One reason why the cheering stopped is that Jesus began to talk more and more about commitment.
- During the last week of Jesus' life a very interesting scene occurred—right in front the crowds.
- An enthusiastic rich young ruler came running to Jesus.
- Jesus says, “Go and sell all that you have and give it to the poor and then come follow me.”
- The masses were no doubt stunned that to follow Jesus great sacrifices had to be made.

13 The Possibilities

- They were also probably bothered for a second reason.
- Prior to this, Jesus' message had largely been one of free grace.
 - Feeding of the 5,000.
 - Healing of the sick.
 - Other signs, wonders, and miracles.
- Except for the “cursing of the fig tree,” Jesus did no significant miracles between his Triumphal “Palm Sunday” entry and his death 5 days later.
- It seemed like the time of miracles was over and the time for commitment had come.

14 The Barren Fig Tree

- Nearly one half of the Gospels is devoted to the last seven days of Jesus' life.
- The only miracle that Jesus performed during that time was the Cursing of the Fig Tree.
- So why would Jesus curse a Fig Tree for no fruit when it wasn't the season for bearing fruit?

15 The Barren Fig Tree

- According to F. F. Bruce, in *Hard Sayings of the Bible*,
 - A fig tree's leaves sprout in late March and in about a week the tree is full of foliage.

- Also during this time, a crop of small knobs appear—which are a kind of early forerunners of real figs.
- Called taqsh they were often eaten by peasants and others when hungry.

16 The Barren Fig Tree

- So when Jesus approaches the Fig Tree and see leaves but finds no “fig buds” to eat, he knows that it is hopeless to expect any fruit from that tree.
- Then he curses it and within hours it is dead—to the shock of His disciples.
- So was it trees that Jesus was concerned about? Or was it symbolic of something else?

17 Good Fruit

- “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. . . . every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.” (Luke 3:8–9 NIV)
- “Therefore, I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.” (Matthew 21:43)

18 The People of the Kingdom

- Who then are the new people of the Kingdom?
 - Remnant of Israel—chosen by grace through faith.
 - Remnant from among Gentiles—chosen by grace through faith.
- What is their purpose?
 - This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. (John 15:8 NIV)
 - To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31–32 NIV)

19 Chosen by Grace

- But you are a chosen people,
 - a royal priesthood,
 - a holy nation,
 - a people belonging to God,
- that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

20 Faith & Grace

- The real reason why the crowds thinned out and the cheering stopped was because not everyone had faith in God.
- So when Jesus’ teachings and call to discipleship demanded commitment many turned the other way.

- But we are chosen of God because we have faith in God and believe He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.
- Therefore, we have been given grace, so that in every good work we will have success and produce much fruit.

21 Faith & Commitment

- People of faith have a unique quality.
- They are willing to make commitments because they understand the law of sowing and reaping.
- The faithfulness of God overshadows any sacrifice of time, money, or devotion to righteousness from us.
- Our flesh never likes to make commitments because it doesn't like to make sacrifices, but everyone who is chosen by grace through faith overcomes the world.
- This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. (1 John 5:4 NIV)

22 Communion

- Tonight as we partake of communion, let us reflect on the grace that is afforded to us who believe.
- Let us ask ourselves, is there any grace I'm leaving on the table.
 - If so, where is my faith weak that is causing me not to be as committed to the teachings of Jesus as I should.
 - Then let us encourage ourselves as we take communion that nothing is impossible with God and that we can take that mountain (unfruitfulness) and throw it in the bottom of the sea.

23 The Lord's Supper