Responses to Jesus ...

Exploring the Identity of One Who Calls Us to Follow Him?

This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me
Matthew 15:8 (ESV)

In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once.
Matthew 21:18-19 (ESV)

Contemplating Your Response to Jesus

A Devotional Challenge

Devotional: On the other side of this insert there is a picture of the Triumphal Entry of Christ with the crowds shouting "Hosanna" ... that very day he entered into the temple and once again drove out those who made a mockery of His Father's House. The next morning he was returning to Jerusalem and saw a fig tree that was "in leaf" but had no promise of fruit *(He was looking for the edible buds that are on a tree "in leaf")*. This action was symbolic of the people in Jerusalem the day before who celebrated His entry ... and one week later shouted "crucify Him."

The devotional challenge this week: Read through Matthew 21 and contemplate the prophecy of Isaiah quoted in Matthew 15:8 as it relates to the outward praise of Jesus that is void of a heart response to the Person of Jesus. As we inch nearer to "Good Friday" consider your response to Jesus, examining yourself and the fruit of your life.

Q: *Is the fruit you are producing consistent with the words coming from your mouth?*

Jesus stated that from "the mouths of the infants & nursing babies you have prepared praise" ... in what ways does this describe your embrace of Jesus? (Hint: *This is descriptive of the humility that marks the heart response to Jesus.***)**

Is the expectation of "fruit" from those who "respond to Jesus" a reasonable expectation? If Jesus were to "lift the leaves of your life, what fruit would he discover?"

What is the relationship between "faith" *(see Mt. 21:21)* **that Jesus is talking about and "fruit" that He expected to find? Are you growing in your faith/dependence upon Jesus in your daily walk?**

What is God Saying to Me? (Personal Application)