



A Fig Tree Cursed

3rd Monday of Lent

Mark 11:12-14

On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see whether perhaps he would find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. He said to it, 'May no one ever eat fruit from you again.' And his disciples heard it.

It seems a terribly petulant and unfair thing for Jesus to do. It wasn't even the season for figs; plus it seems quite out of character for him to curse a tree. Perhaps his anxiety about what lay before him was getting the best of him. We can all understand that. Who among us has not spoken and acted unreasonably when put under great strain? He would be less than human if he did not feel the strain, knowing what was before him.

Whatever the case, Mark uses this enigmatic story, which is also included in Matthew's Gospel, as a commentary on the Temple leadership whom Jesus will challenge. The fig tree stands as a symbol of Israel, here embodied in the Temple and its leadership. As the tree was leafy and green giving the appearance of health and productivity but bore no figs, so the Temple and its leadership showed signs of vibrant life but bore no fruit.

The story speaks to us as well. It is important for us to take the time and make the investment to nurture our minds and spirits in the things of the faith, but the purpose for that nurture is not simply our satisfaction and wellbeing but our ability to bear fruit in the kingdom of God. Our faith is measured not merely by its appearance but especially by its productivity.

Prayer

Dear Lord, Grant that in this day I may bear fruit for you in my daily walk. Amen.