

May 28, 2021

Sirach 44:1, 9-13

Mark 11: 11-26

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Liturgically, this is a month full of solemnities: Ascension, Pentecost and this coming Sunday, the Holy Trinity. In today's Ordinary time reading from Sirach, we look back and see how God's glory was manifest in Israel's history through famous ancestors. The people celebrated in these chapters deserve memory for their godliness. They bore fruit in the sight of God.

In the Gospel, we also move back in the life of Jesus to his entrance into Jerusalem according to Mark, which has fewer details than Matthew's version. Jesus enters the city and looks in the Temple and then he leaves to spend the night in Bethany. The next day upon his return to Jerusalem, he curses a fig tree. Why curse the fig tree when it wasn't even the time of season for it to bear fruit. This is not like Jesus and he seems rather unreasonable.

The fig tree was a common Old Testament image of Israel. It is a symbol of Israel's relationship with God. The fig tree without fruit represents those people among the Jews who rejected Jesus. When he came to them looking for faith in his message, he found nothing. In a sense they had closed their minds and hearts and withered up. The tree is a metaphor for those who failed to bear good fruit in their lives.

Mark weaves another story into this Gospel. Jesus enters the Temple again and ends the activity of the buyers and sellers and money changers. They have turned what was meant to be a house of prayer for all people into a den of thieves, a marketplace. The Temple, symbol of God's presence and religious ritual, has been degenerated into an opportunity to make money.

The sense and experience of God's presence was being lost. Jesus is in conflict with religious leaders over issues of prayer and right behavior. Faith had been reduced to commercialism.

The sellers and buyers and religious authorities also failed to see the presence of God working in and through Jesus himself. Those who were corrupting the Temple's purpose, like the fig tree, had failed to bear good fruit. They had withered up in mind and heart and actions.

Jesus urges his disciples to bear fruit by developing a deep faith and trust in God's presence in their lives. He says, for those with faith, anything is possible.

Imagine Jesus coming up to you or to us, as he did the fig tree. What would he find? What is the Lord hungry for from us? At this time in our history and in the world and national situation, what is the fruit God wants us to bear so God can do incredible things in and through us?

It's never too late to bear fruit and we are not alone, for Jesus has given us his very own Spirit.

As Pope Francis expressed in *Laudato Si'* no. 80, "the creative Spirit is present and renewing creation."

"The Spirit of God has filled the universe with possibilities and therefore, from the very heart of things, something new can always emerge. ... The Spirit, infinite bond of love is intimately present at the very heart of the universe, inspiring and bringing new pathways." No. 238.

Today, let us go forth to bear good fruit in our care for one another and our world.