

Bible Reading: Mark 11:11-20

"Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, He went out to Bethany with the Twelve. 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 courts 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.' 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, Jesus and His disciples 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!'"

Bible Reading: John 15:1-10

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 'I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. 'As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.'"

Imagine it's the day after Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He had briefly visited the temple the day before and then spent the night in a neighboring town, and now He's walking back into the city. But on His way, something peculiar happens: He discovers a fig tree with leaves on it. If you lived in first-century Jerusalem, you would know that leaves wouldn't be on this tree unless it had fruit.

But this tree is fruitless...so Jesus immediately curses it. Then, He enters the Jerusalem temple and angrily drives out the merchants and money-exchangers.

God intended for the temple to be a place where anyone could come and draw near to Him. But the Jews turned His house into a marketplace that took advantage of others. This wasn't just a temple problem - it was a reflection of the heart of the Jewish people. Like the fig tree, they looked like they were flourishing, but their actions weren't producing fruit that aligned with God's heart.

This angered Jesus because God was the One who established Israel. God was the One who called them by name, blessed them, and promised them a Savior. And now, their Savior had arrived - and they didn't even recognize Him. They had walked so far away from God, that they couldn't see Him standing in their midst.

Their spiritual state grieved Jesus because He knew how much God loved them. It was God's love for them - and for us - that was leading Jesus to the cross.

Even though we have all turned away from God, He placed our wrongdoing on Jesus and made a way for anyone to come and worship Him.

Jesus gave up everything to show us how deeply God cares.

And in response, He wants us to abide in Him. Not because we have to - but because when we are deeply rooted in His love, we reflect His love to others. And by reflecting His love, we prove to the world that we are alive in Christ.