

Parable of the Fig Tree

Scripture: Luke 13: 6 – 9

May 3, 2020

Let me start out telling you about a gardening story that happened to me in Advanced Biology in high school. I took Advanced Bio independent study with my teacher being Mr. Wally Welshans. In the course, I had to do an experiment with plants. I read an article on how plants responded to the gardener's way of speaking to the plants. It stated that if you talk nice to the plants, they grow more and if you talk poorly to the plants, they would not grow as much. So I decided to use this article as my thesis for my class.

Mr. Welshans' found for me two closets to use in the high school. I purchased an even amount of every flower for my experiment. I purchased six marigolds, six daisies, and six petunias. I also bought two planting boxes and I put three of each kind of flower in the boxes and put them in their designated closets. I put a light on each box and made two identical food supplies for each closet.

For three months I would go into each closet: in the one closet I called the 'nice room', I would go in and praise the flowers and feed them. I would tell the flowers how beautiful they looked. In the other closet, I called the 'nasty room', I would go in and curse at the flowers and feed them. I would tell the flowers how ugly they looked.

Some school days, I was very busy so I would ask my friends if they would go into the rooms to talk to my flowers and feed them. Do you know, most of friends liked to go into the 'nasty room' more than the 'nice room'! I guess they liked cursing at the ugly plants more than praising the beautiful plants.

After three months of doing this, the conclusion I arrived at was that the flowers in the 'nice room' grew slightly more than the flowers in the 'nasty room'. Oh, by the way – I got an 'A' on my project and I had fun doing it!

Enough about my Advanced Bio project, today we are going to look at the parable of the fig tree. It is about gardening.

Jesus did a lot of teaching through his use of parables. A parable is a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson.

In the Gospel of Luke, we find the parable of the Fig Tree. Jesus tells this parable about a man who owns an orchard and he wants to cut down his fig tree because it does not bear fruit. The owner has given up on the fig tree. The owner has lost hope in the fig tree. But another person, a gardener, springs into action. He has not given up on the fig tree. He has not lost hope in the fig tree. This gardener does everything within his power to prevent the owner from giving up on the fig tree. The gardener pleads with the owner for the life of the fig tree. He enthusiastically hauls out the shovel and wheelbarrow. He lays out his plans for replenishing the soil with nutrients from the fertilizer. He makes his case to the owner. He asked the owner to give the fig tree one more year to bear fruit. It may be a lost cause, but the gardener is not ready to give up yet!

I have to admit, sometimes I am that fig tree owner. Sometimes I am ready to give up hope. How about you? In my time in ministry, I have met with many people who have lost hope because of the death of a child, because a divorce and end of a marriage, or because of the loss of a loved one. Oh yes, I bet each one of us here today have at times given up hope in something to happen.

I also have to admit that I did, some days, enjoy going into the 'nasty room' in my high school Bio experiment. I enjoyed yelling at the flowers in that room. How about you? I have met many people in my life who seem to enjoy speaking negatively about life and other people. They are like my high school friends who would volunteer more readily to curse than to praise. Oh yes, I bet each of us have at times given into the urge to speak poorly of things.

The gardener does not write off the fig tree as a lost cause. He gets in there. He gets down in the dirt. He gets down into the muck and gets his hands dirty. He grabs a shovel and starts digging. He rolls up his sleeves and grabs a handful of that smelly fertilizer, and starts filling it is around the base of the tree.

We are the gardener of Jesus in this world. Let us not write off our world as a lost cause. Let us get in there. Let us get down in the dirt. Let us get down into the muck of this world and get our hands dirty. Let us grab a shovel of faith and start digging. Let us roll up our sleeves and grab a handful of that faith in Jesus, and start spreading it is around the world.

In our world today with all that is happening with the coronavirus, Jesus needs gardeners! With more deaths from three months of the coronavirus than twelve years of the Vietnam War, God needs gardeners! Let us not write off our world as a lost cause. Let us get in there. Let us get down in the dirt. Let us get down into the muck of this world and get our hands dirty. Let us grab a shovel of love and start digging. Let us roll up our sleeves and grab a handful of compassion, and start spreading it is around the world.

Find a place in your life where you can dig up a clump of spiritual dirt and hold it in your hand. Imagine your faith as a rich soil that is full of nutrients of wisdom and teachings of Jesus. Now, imagine spreading that spiritual soil on others. Do not give up hope – find your hope in Jesus Christ and pray each day for God to fertilize your faith so that your hope may be renewed.

Treat each person you communicate with like they are in the 'nice room'. Praise them and lift them up. No matter how sheltering in place has made you feel, continue making your room to be a 'nice room'. And if you get overwhelmed and venture into the 'nasty room, shy away from cursing the world, and give God and Jesus Christ your praise. Let no part of your life be the 'nasty room'!

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, may your parable of the fig tree touch our hearts and may we always be your gardeners in this world. May we never become a people who give up on the world or become a people who only like to go into the 'nasty room'.

O God, plant your Word so deep within us that we may persevere in hard times like now and rejoice in good times. May your Word bear fruit in our lives and in your world.

And finally Lord, make all of us people of praise for you, make us positive people, and make us your gardeners in this world. AMEN.