

Lent 3, The Barren Fig Tree; Luke 13. 1-9

STARTER (*In pairs*): Tell of a time when someone gave you a second chance. How did it feel?

WORSHIP

REFLECTION (*Read the passage aloud; then re-read the passage & commentary and reflect on the personal focus questions in silence. Share what you wish of your reflection with others in triplets*)

COMMENTARY

Jesus is heading for Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the centre for God's chosen people. God loved and cared for the people, he cultivated and fertilised them but Jerusalem failed to respond and bear fruit, they ignored the messengers of God. Jesus tries to urge the people with a message that they need to repent (turn around, see things from a different perspective, live with a different focus, change their hearts and their minds and their ways). Perhaps his coming is their second chance (?). To sharpen up his point he tells a parable about a fig tree. The fig tree was often grown in shallow soils; this one took out nutrients from the soil- it did not produce anything in three years. The chances are that if it had not produced fruit in its first three years it was unlikely to ever do so. It "took" but "gave" nothing. On the advice of the gardener, the owner gives the fig tree one last chance to bear fruit. Perhaps Jesus is reminding the people that they would be judged according to the opportunities they had been given.

The 2000 Methodist Conference document "Our Calling" speaks of God's call to us to make more followers of Jesus Christ. Is this our aim? Have we any targets or goals to help this to happen?

PERSONAL FOCUS

1. Which verse speaks to you? What is God saying to you?
2. If God were to ask what use you are, what answer might you be able to give?
3. Is God calling you to make changes to your life so you can bear more fruit?
4. What additional things could you "give" to God and "show" to his glory?

LIFE FOCUS

1. What things in the life of your church perhaps need the challenge of the fig tree- to produce fruit or be cut down?
2. Do we give enough thought to reviewing the purpose and results (fruits) of the various groups/organisations within church life? How could we do it better?

REVIEW TIME:

Have the reflections helped you to focus on how many fig trees there might be in your life and the life of your church? Think on these things during Lent. Has this SCC helped you focus on how to deal with them?

PRAYER TIME

Pray for help and guidance to prune what needs cutting back in your life and for more willingness to give second chances to others and ourselves. Pray that our church communities might be fruitful.