

Jesus told about the five virgins in whose race the door was shut. Now it wasn't because they were unclean but it was because their lamps were (not burning.)

Jesus stood before this fig tree--this tree was supposed to have fruit on it, but it only had leaves. And He condemned it to death.

Once He said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law of the prophets; I am come to fulfill." And one of the fundamental laws of life is that (only the useful) things survive.

They tell us that even squirrels have bushy tails because they are useful for balancing on the limbs of trees. Cats have their eyes in the front of their heads so that they can see the game in sight. A rabbit has his eye on the side of his head so he can watch the hunter. You can notice all of this that God has created in the world. Animals have a marvelous sense of smell. You can take your (arm) and put it in a sling and let it be inactive and it will (wither) away. So it is with human life. God made us for a purpose and I don't believe that there is any person here just through accident. There is a purpose and a plan for each person. There are people who are fed up with living and you will find that they are failing to bear real fruit for Christ.

The Bible says that unless we bear fruit we die. There are

INTRODUCTION

v.17 Jesus had spent the night out in the country. Coming back into the city the next morning He saw a fig tree and being hungry He went down to it to get some figs to eat. But He found it had nothing but leaves and said, "Let no fruit grow on this tree henceforth forever." And the tree withered away.

v.20 The (disciples) marveled at the fig tree withering. To them Jesus pointed out that if one has faith he can move mountains; if one prays he shall receive. The value of the fig tree lies in the fruit it produces; the value of faith and prayer are measured in the results that they bring.

The greatest temptation of religion is to become worship centered instead of (service) centered. As the story which you have heard many times of the ladies who came to church late and asked the janitor if the service was over. He made an inspiring reply, "Lady, the worship is over but the service has just begun." That would be true of every experience of worship, but the danger lies in the fact that we have satisfied ourselves with the act of worship.

After Jesus and some of His disciples had had a great experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter wanted to stay there. But Jesus bade him back down to the valley where they found the boy who needed help. And to those who had tried

to help the boy but failed. Jesus said, "It was a matter of faith and prayer and fasting." Service without power gained through worship is inadequate. But worship which does not express itself in service is worthless.

The fig tree which Jesus saw was supposed to have fruit. When it had leaves it was also supposed to bear figs. But this fig tree had nothing but leaves. Jesus condemns the tree to death--the principle of life without fruit.

Madam Chiangkai-shek said, "Confucianism worships ancestors, but never build an old-folks home!" Such a religion is no better than a fig tree which has gone to leaves.

Once a soap manufacturer was arguing with the minister about religion. He named instances of wicked men, corruption in the world, and said that religion had not done any good. About that time a little boy who had been playing in the mud came walking by. The minister said, "Neither has soap done any good because there are still dirty people in the world." The manufacturer replied, "Soap is of no value unless it is applied." "Exactly," said the minister, "And the same is true of religion."

I read once of a father who left in his will two thousand dollars a year for his boy as long as he was in college. The boy continued in college for 46 years and when he died he had

used it. There are people who spend a lifetime talking about goodness; some even read the Bible; some even spend a little time in prayer; some go to church. But actually they never use their religion.

The great sin here is the sin of uselessness. Did Jesus use His power to curse the fig tree? He used the power to heal; He used His power to save. But He never used the power to hurt. He spoke kindly to sinners and was always ready to forgive them. This is one time that our Lord warned against the uselessness of life. So many parables of God talk about eternal life.

Jesus told about Dives who went to Hell and as far as the record goes he didn't steal or cheat--he just (failed to help) the poor man at his gate.

Jesus told about the rich farmer who lost his soul. He worked hard but he failed to use the fruits of his labor for any worthwhile service.

Jesus had contempt for the Priests and Levites. They did not rob or cheat the man who was wounded; they just passed him by.

There was the servant who was cast into outer darkness; he did not use in any wrongful ways his talents which were intrusted to him. He simply buried it in the ground and did nothing with it.

avoid God.

Thanks were subsidized and sin was artificially erased with blood, but the whole industry was vain. Religion was a sham of regulations. The Literegy, the codes, the chanting--all of this was as death. Israel acted as if she had the last word. The Pharisees gave the impression that they had arrived.

But Godliness was as dead as a door-nail. The traffic in the temple was a testimony to this. There was just a corpse of religion. Jesus caught them red-handed in the temple that day and He was angry--not because religion was so idol, but because they were pretending that everything was working beautifully.

Piety had become just a surface thing and they thought it was an absolute guarantee of salvation. The whole sick business was carried on to rob the poor and exploit the innocent. The temple was just a land office business in birds and sheep. The house of prayer was an auction barn knee deep in mud with

animals in the stalls and the Priests were splitting the profits and cheating under the counter. The gaul of calling this thing religion!

This is the thing that drove John the Baptist to the desser. It sent Christ into a rage and He drove them all out, calling it

Some people who seen shocked at what Christ was doing here. This tree was producing no fruit and He uses His power of destruction. This is (not a matter as to how long) you will live. You do not know about that. But one thing is certain--you ought to be living now and bearing fruit. The young soldier who was killed leading his men up the hill during the battle! His mother was crushed that he died so young. But it was pointed out to her that her son really packed more living into that 30 minutes he used climbing the hill than some people put in 70 years. The unhappiest people in the world are the ones who are living within themselves. Is there a single soul who would look you squarely in the eye and say, "I thank God for you. My life is better because of you. I am glad you are living." Would anybody say that to me? If you were to die tonight, would it be much of a loss to anybody? Would it?

What is the answer to the fruitless life? Before we can do our best we must first be our best. The first step is the (right relationship) with God. "Take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord to Thee."

Jesus worked a miracle early Monday morning of the last week of His life. We note that the day before He had been treated royally; people had shouted along the streets; they had waved palm branches. But today He will curse a tree for telling a lie and He will go on to clean the temple.

Killing this tree was the only negative miracle that Jesus ever did. All the rest of His work was constructive. Some scholars look on this as an embarrassment for after all Christ has already broken up the Sabbath with wonders and now He is going to swear at a tree. So many scholars have drugged it up and tried to talk about this in other ways than the truth meant.

Of course, it was a common thing for the Rabbi of those days not to curse but to bless. Of course, he could also curse. Cursing was taken seriously as a standard equipment against the attacks of the Devil. Even Elisha, the prophet, invited bears to come out and eat up a bunch of juvenile delinquents who made fun of him. Jesus was involved with only one curse and it is credited not against man but against the tree.

The extreme liberals may run from this incident, but what could be wrong with taking a quick look. Some of the Scriptures may not strike a light to us now, but if we look at them it may fire another imagination. Those who magnify differences into serious difficulties are the true Pharisees of history for they strain at a knat and swallow a camel.

^{v.12} On the following day after they left Bethany, He felt hungry and noticed in the distance a fig tree in leaves. He went to see if He could find anything on it. Jesus did not spend Palm Sunday night in the city, but He went next door to Bethany probably to Mary and Martha who were just getting accustomed to

living with their resserected Lazarius. So Jesus found the fig tree before sun-up Monday morning.

Christ was not just putting on an act with the fig tree. He was hungry. While it was not the season for figs, the fig tree was in leaves which meant it was (asking to be picked). Fig trees (produce figs first) and then leaves, as was the custom in much of Palestine. The tree fooled Jesus, but Jesus was not fooling.

^{v.14} May no one ever again receive fruit from you. Jesus was not blaming the plant just for uselessness, but was using it to illustrate God's feeling about the falseness in human nature. The tree was pretending to bear.

^{v.15} It is (not by accident) that the cursing of the fig tree was followed by the cleansing of the temple. Something dreadful had happened to Judiasm and Jesus went to the heart of it a little later on in the morning. ^{v.17} My house shall not be called of all nations a house of prayer for ye have made it a den of thieves."

The key to the fig tree scene is the sin inside the temple.

The tragedy was not merely in the temple's impotence, but in her pretence of power. She dressed in the uniform of faith, decorating her speech and language; but it was a fake front for a fake that never saw active service.

joyed.

By the grace of God and the Lord Jesus we are members of the church. That's the way we fit in the picture. What kind of fruit does God expect of us? The answer is plain--goodness, Godliness, character, the way of life. We could enumerate some of the qualities--the quality of obedience--Jesus wants us to obey Him. These qualities and much more are our responsibility. We see that everything has some ultimate purpose.

For example, the man sees an end to everything in his own environment. Everything points to man as the lord of creation. That is what he was intended to be and everything waits upon him.

God, all the time, is looking for the fruits that should grow naturally. We find that he was disappointed in this tree. The fact is that Jesus was not looking for grapes on this tree but He was looking for the kind of fruit which the tree was supposed to bear.

Strangely you find such people within the church of Christ. What on earth are such people doing in the church, we ask? Well, there are various reasons.

There are those who are there because it's the thing to do--that is, it's fashionable.

Sometimes they are there because they want to be used of the

the miracle of the fig tree is just like that--his rack instead of compassion--He said that they would be destroyed. The miracle gives us something more to worry about.

Is the church today all that she is cracked up to be? Has she been busy with other things and forgotten what happened to the temple? How are we doing? Do we put up a spire top and with a cross ring a bell and think we are in business? Whose business?

Is there nothing more to the church than organization, a choir, and a few hired professionals? We talk about salvation, but do we have it? Then why do we have such cheap conversions?

One can have a church funeral and his children neatly christened and all of this suffices to make him a Christian!!

Promouncements, campaigns for funds, drives for memberships. I wonder sometimes if the church has lost the key of the kingdom.

Even our prayers are weak *****
What? Mother's Prayer (Home)
make Christ
The visiting clergyman was being entertained by four-year-old Trudy while her mother was upstairs dressing.
"And do you say your prayers every night, little one?" asked the minister.
"Oh, no," answered Trudy. "Mother says them for me."
"Indeed? And what does she say?"
"She says, 'Thank heaven you're in bed!'" --Virginia Methodist Advocate

Christ? Is the church a house of prayer filled with Godly men of prayer, singing in excitement of forgiveness given to all? Are we thrilled by the way our children embrace the faith?

How many good Samaritians make their home here in the church? Are we looking for the lost son to come back? Are we sending

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(Pronouncements, campaigns for funds, drives for memberships)
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What kind of mothers are we to our members. We claim to make Christians!! What did we do about the last one? Who was he? Did we praise God for Him? Do we really pray to reach another? Are we comforted and encouraged about the things of Christ? Is the church a house of prayer filled with Godly men of prayer, singing in excitement of forgiveness given to all? Are we thrilled by the way our children embrace the faith?

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Are we looking for the lost son to come back? Are we sending

the seventy out to serve? Or has that high life died down leaving us like a tree with leaves and no fruit?

We would remind those on the outside who complain of hypocrites in here that we can always use one more. Nevertheless we must dread hypocrisy lest Christians become wool in sheep's clothing. Those who never darken the door of the church are perhaps in danger as those who come in and join the church without any service. When we identify with Christianity we take on a terrible risk of being two-faced. It's bad enough to be anti-Christ without adding a pretense. The fig tree was cursed not for its failure but for its false show of green leaves without nourishing fruit to back it up. Hypocrisy in God's house was the only thing that ever made Christ pass judgement in this way.

^{v. 20} This tree was not checked that night on the way home, but the next morning returning to Jerusalem they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up and Peter recalled what had happened and said, "Rabbi, here is the tree; it is withered." It was like Jesus to dismiss the compliment with the expression of confidence in His disciples. He told why He had worked that miracle; what He had done was nothing unless they would have faith in God. ^{v. 23} He told them that if they had faith they could move mountains--they could lift it up and place it in the sea; they must get rid of their inward doubts. Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours.

After such a difficult miracle, Jesus didn't give the disciples a little relief. No! That incident was a jumping off point! He moved them on out and told them that (there was power) at their fingertips. What is He waiting for but your faith and my faith? What is He worried about tonight, but your (insincerity) and mine? This parable has to do with people who are privileged and who are thereby expected to be responsible. In other words this miracle concerns everyone of us for we are privileged persons. It is this--that natural endowment, natural blessings, and religious privileges such as they had in the day of our Lord. Unfortunately, the tendencies of those in the day of Jesus, just as it is with us, is to consider the advantages which we enjoy constitute some (special claim) upon God's favor. So far did these people in the days of Jesus carry this (point of view) that if their neighbors were taken by death and they were spared, they regarded that as something special from God.

This story is still fresh; it still has a meaning for us and the Christian church. Here is something that tells us that God is expecting something from you. He has a right to this expectation just as the tree expected fruit. It did not come there by accident; the man who planted the tree there wanted it there. He had chosen that particular kind of tree because he wanted figs. He put it there where the soil was rich; the tree would be well protected. He guaranteed that tree by good care,

of failure.
We find that in this story here there was no fruit, therefore He instructed that this tree might be destroyed and cut down.

That brings me to this subject. We hear a great deal today about the rights of man, and that brings me to a subject which I would like to turn around to the rights of God. I do not hear very much in the common speech today of the rights of God. We are always talking about the rights of man and the rights of individuals. I'm not speaking about man's rights in regard to his fellow man, but about man's rights in regards to God. What

→ a man has a right to expect from God! *A Little Tot in Church*
1st Time → usher passed offering plates - piped up - loud
"Don't pay for me, Daddy, I'm under five!"
Some men have even dared enough to write what they would do if there were God. To me, that is blasphemy.

I think God has some rights in regard to human life. To my own heart, to your heart--this to me is the first truth of human life. The sovereignty of God is based upon the fact that every man is the creation of God and the offspring of God. I am a thought of God--physically, spiritually, intellectually, emotionally. Analyze this as you will. God made me; I am God's property and you are the property of God.

If there be a touch of evil upon the world, it's a touch

of the human hand of a Satan. This is God's world--His sunshine

positions.) Yes! I believe there are actually some in the church who want to use the church for that reason.

As a man who once said that he wanted to join a church! Well, he felt like he was new in the city and he said that he had discovered that in his particular line of business it wouldn't be altogether unhelpful if he were a member of that certain church. Why, of course, he should have been rejected.

There are the tares mingled with the wheat to whom our Lord referred in another parable. It is true that sometimes we adopt the attitude of the servant of the man who had sown good seed in his field in that he wanted to go in and pull out the tares, forgetting that he might also root up some of the wheat.

Now there are others who are fruitless in the sense that their righteousness is (the negative kind.) These are the kind of people who are always amazed when they are charged with disappointing the God who has so blessed them and favored them.

In fact, they resent it. These are people who are always talking of the (bad things) that they do not do, but they are never fond of talking about the good things in which they could be engaged. These people are really weak. They are completely (satisfied) with their own moral fitness and they brand themselves with reverence. They seem to pay respectful attention to the Gospel, but they mistake the joy and the privilege of it.

showers, the skillful hands that tended it--this was felt to be justification for existence; but God expects results and He expects them of us because we are so privileged with His means.

The trouble with the tree is that it had the sunshine, the showers, the attention but there were no figs. There are people in the church who are like that. They enjoy the means of grace; they enjoy the assembling of God's people together. They even sing praises with them. They enjoy the sermon sometimes. But there is no evidence of fruitfulness within their lives. They are not growing in grace. They are not able to stand today where some years back they stumbled. They cannot say that today they have an enthusiasm or desire for discipleship.

For such people there is a judgement--that's why He said there is a curse. God said, "If I wanted a tree just to shade myself from the sun, I would have planted an oak tree, but if you want fruit, you plant a fruit tree."

Out of this parable you find that you can't read it without examining your heart. Perhaps for many years by the grace of God you have occupied some place in the vineyard of the church. You have been cultivated, and you have been given attention. But there are no returns, there are no results for the Lord. If there are none, the judgement is to cut it down.

"Give it a little more time" (someone would say) "Let it have

a little extra time." There was a parable in the New Testament and the tree was spared for a while. If you are fruitless you are given a little more time of the season of grace to bring fruit. If there was no fruit on the tree after it had been given a little more time, it was to be cut down. What about your life? After a situation or experience what? After a sermon, what? After further warning, what? I believe your time is come. The approach of your time can be overdue and overdone. But anyway I am hoping that you will respond to this message. Jesus was here talking to them about the main things in the last hours of His life here on this earth. We need to know that we are privileged. Have you done what God wants you to do or are you simply indulging yourself? Do you spend your time day after day upon yourself?

➤ Put yourself in the place of the tree with its attention. Go over this in your mind with all the mercies that you know of God's grace upon you. Think about the blessings of your life the church, the fellowship, the prayers, the preaching--all of these things that you have been surrounded with and witness too? Has it all been for vain glory?

➤ Isaiah told about a vineyard. He talks about the Lord's vineyard, the Lord's plants, the Lord's expectations of fruit, the Lord's disappointments, and the Lord's judgement upon the vineyard. Judgement, according to Isaiah, was immediate because

sorrowful discover to make after all the privilege
and the opportunities, there was failure. Who is this searcher and seeker? In verse 12 we find that it is the hungry, saving son of God. Think of all that He had done for that tree!

Where He seeks a fig tree, He does not seek among thorns and briars. This tree had the name of fruit bearing but it was a desception. Many look like they are Christians but there is no fruit.

In verse 13 we read that the discoverer found nothing. First of all he found an abundant profession with the abundance of life and play of activity, but like the man, He said, "One thing that thou lackest." Like Jezebell painted up, like a cloud without water, the barren fig tree had a name to live but was dead. Revelation 3:1

Perfect destitution--nothing but leaves--nothing for Christ
This is a picture of those who spend their strength daily in things that do not count. He looks and He takes time to look carefully beneath the leaves. God judges the heart. The show of leaves, fresh and green, hide things from the eye of man, but the all searching eye of God seeks it out. As the Psalmist said, "Search me oh God and try me."

→ Gen 3:7 "Sawd Fig leaves together & made themselves aprons"
Adam tried to cover himself with leaves, but God did not acknowledge such. He knew that he was naked. Nothing but

grass but it has destroyed many. The Devil never made anything; he has destroyed much. Evil is destructive not constructive. I live in God's world. The blue sky is His; the rising sun is His. All the forces of my life which He has given me are His. I am in the world and this is God's world. My dear friends, this fig tree--God made it. That was God's tree; He owned it. And He had right to its proprietorship and we need to be careful about this to see that we have some rights all right, but God has rights. We talk too much about man's rights instead of God's rights today. I think that ought to be turned around for a while.

I think another thing God had some moral expectations. He decided upon the action here. Have you not a right to expect apples from an apple tree? Well, you wouldn't argue with me about that. You apply that in the higher realm. If a man is God's creation, if all the forces of his being have come from God, what has God a right to expect from man! You ask a boy what a man has a right to expect from a fig tree and he will say, "Figs." "What have you a right to expect from an apple tree?" "Apples!" Now I am not afraid of the simplicity of this illustration.

What does God expect from a man? He expects manhood, that is all. What does He expect from a boy? Boyhood. What does He

expect from a girl? Girlhood! From a woman--womanhood! God does not expect you to ever be an angel, but He does expect that you should be a man. God expects you to worship, pray, be religious; God requires of a man that he be a man. A preacher was dying and his daughter said to him, "You will soon see the angels." He replied, "Folks are better than angels."

God comes through Christ here, and the fruits of the plant are examined until He finds the fruits that He wants. The question is can God find His fruits in your life? What is manhood? Manhood is revealed in the Man of Nazareth--that's manhood. The test of our lives is the test of not comparison with others, but the test that we make with Christ. Men have always said, "I thank Thee that I am not as other men, even as this poor Publican." What is man? A man is the man Christ Jesus--His humility is what we need and to measure life by His. He was the revelation of God; He is ever the one that we should stand beside until we look like Jesus. We are engaged in a battle in this world and in Christ we see the heart of God. We are familiar with Him and He is the one who leads us. If we are going to meet God's standards of bearing fruit, then we must measure up to His life. Nothing but leaves! The spirit grieves over years of wasted life. There is no fruit in the world's sins. We cannot gladden and satisfy the heart of God unless there is service--service to help men.

I read the illustration of a person who thought it was a sin and bad thing to put children in an orphanage who had no father nor mother. But this other friend said, "I am not so sure about that. I don't agree with you because," he said, "in scores of instances those children only had their chance of life when father and mother were dead." That may sound crazy to you, but it's more true than you think. It is true of the children of the suburbs and the cities and the countryside today. You feed your children; you clothe and educate them, but what chance have some of them of becoming spiritually educated (without your example). Had it ever occurred to you, young man, young woman, that somebody could take your place at the office making a better chance for the person sitting next to you to become pure? These searching words of Jesus, "He that is not for me is against me. He that gathereth not with me, scattereth." These are the only two moral forces in the world--those that are scattered and those that are gathered. Some that are using God's resources fit into the former group. Now I am not standing in judgement on you tonight but God knows all of us at the judgement bar. It is the words of Christ that we are to be judged on, and we stand together before those words tonight. He comes to us with the revelation of the rights of God.

In verse 13 we read that there is the search. It is a

In verse 21 we read of the judgement. The tree was withered away.. Woe unto you tonight, hypocrite. How shall you escape the damnation of Hell?? What is the value of a creed, a church connection, or a hope for a life if there is nothing to satisfy the living, yearning soul of Jesus. When He comes it is not to make us fruitful, but to seek fruit.

In verse 20 we read that the curse affected the roots and the tree dried up from the roots. That is, when He spoke the word that power kept back the sap in the earth and the tree dried up. To him that hath no fruit from him shall be taken away the sap that produces fruit.

It was like it in the days of Noah and in the days of Lot. So it will be today. I am fearful for the days of the church II Thessalonians 1:7,10.

It withered away because of the sin of omission. Its beautiful appearance, its beautiful leaves--what could they do for it now? Beware as the Pharisee and take warning!

*What people lack is a purpose or mission in life
 " " " " Faith to live by*

See here a young woman enjoying a cocktail hour, she is the life of the party. She is gay, but all of this is outward show. a few hours later she takes her own life. The note left behind reads - "This is the best way out" - That for a 21 yr old girl - what poverty of soul -

*S. Nov - Oct. 16, 77 P.M. - WXR I
 So. Nov - June 29, 69 P.M. WXR I
 So. Nov - Feb. 21, 1965 P.M. WXR I*

How different the letter of a 19yr. old girl to
Dr. John Bonnell - (her death by suicide)

"I thought you would like a progress report.
I went back to college as you suggested.
The Teachers & students were wonderful -
I have now made the Dean's list
and know exactly where I am going.

Ever since that day a year ago
when I found Christ, the way has
grown steadily brighter.

It is a wonderful grind.
I am afraid no longer.

She found a faith to (live by)
and a purpose to (live for)