

## The Events of Holy Week – Fig Monday

After Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, he spent the night in the nearby town of Bethany which was 2 miles outside of Jerusalem. Now it was Monday morning and Jesus heads back toward Jerusalem, the final journey to the city of his suffering and death. Being that it was morning, Jesus was hungry. Seeing a fig tree "in leaf," he went to find fruit on it. Fig trees in Jerusalem normally begin to get leaves in March or April but do not produce figs until they are fully leaved; this normally occurs around June. But this fig tree was an abnormality; it was already fully leaved and so one would expect to find fruit on it. When no fruit was found, it was then that Jesus cursed the fig tree, saying "*May no one ever eat fruit from you again,*" and immediately the fig tree began to wither and by the next day it was all but dead.

This fruitless fig tree was a picture of the fruitless nation of Israel. They had always been God's chosen people from whom the promised Savior would come. But now that Jesus was here and among them, they failed to place their faith and trust in him. They were a very fickle people at best, for within a few days of Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, they would only 5 days later on Good Friday deny their King and crucify Him.

The cursing of the fig tree was a call to repentance. With Jesus' crucifixion only days away, the people still did not see the seriousness of their sin. From the very start of Jesus' ministry he preached, "*The kingdom of heaven is near. Repent and believe the good news*" (Mark 1:15). This cursing of the fig tree would also recall to mind the words of John the Baptist, "*Produce fruit in keeping with repentance*" (Luke 3:8). It is a reminder to us that without the fruit of repentance there is no forgiveness, and without forgiveness there is no salvation, only eternal death in hell.

May we this Holy Week not be like the fig tree...fruitless. May we recognize our many sins and failures against God's Law. May we recognize the damnable state of our sinful flesh, and repent. Only then can we see the grace of God given in the sacrifice of his one and only Son. As we continue to see Jesus making his way to the cross, know it was my sin that would cause his great suffering and death, and it was for my forgiveness and eternal life that he would rise again.

Martin Luther once wrote, "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent!' he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance." If there ever is a day we think we do not need to repent, we should pinch ourselves to make sure we are still part of this world. Every day we have need to repent and turn to Christ for his mercy, and every day Christ forgives those, who by faith, trust in his redeeming work. Every day we live, we live as forgiven children of God.

**Read Mark 11:12-19 as today's Scripture lesson.**

Blessings to you and your families,  
Pastor Guse