

## EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

### GARDENING

#### EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

##### *Introducing the Gospel*

*The fig tree is given a new chance (Luke 13: 1-9)*

God looks for proper fruit from the people of God, just as the owner of a fig tree looks for fruit from that tree. The gardener gives the fig tree one more chance by nurturing it. So Jesus gives the people of God one more chance. Here is one of Luke's distinctive images of Jesus' Messiahship of which we are reminded during Lent.

The image to stimulate reflection on Luke's parable of the fig tree is *gardening*.

##### *Core extract from the Gospel (Luke 13: 6-9; for reflection throughout the week)*

Then Jesus told this parable:

'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard;  
and he came looking for fruit on it and found none.

So he said to the gardener, "See here!

For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree,  
and still I find none. Cut it down!

Why should it be wasting the soil?"

The gardener replied, "Sir, let it alone for one more year,  
until I dig around it and put manure on it.

If it bears fruit next year, well and good;  
but if not, you can cut it down."

##### *Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)*

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you look for fruit from your people.  
shape our lives with your care and love,  
that we may bear good fruit,  
to your praise and glory;  
for you are our God,  
today and always.  
Amen.

#### READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

**Luke 13: 1-9**

**Repent or perish**

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, ‘Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.’

**The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree**

Then he told this parable: ‘A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, “See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?” He replied, “Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig round it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.”’

## ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

### *Dwelling with the text (Luke 13: 1-9)*

Today's Gospel reading is unique to Luke. Begin to explore how Luke develops the parable of the fig tree by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

### *Thinking and talking*

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- What is the significance of the fig tree and the vineyard?
- How do you understand the reference to 'fruit'?
- Why is Luke emphasising giving the tree one more chance?
- How does the parable of the fig tree relate to the earlier passage on repentance?
- What does this narrative say for us today?

### *Using your Bible*

Explore the significance of the fig tree and the vineyard in the Old Testament.

- Psalm 80: 8
- Isaiah 5: 1-7
- Jeremiah 2: 21
- Hosea 9: 10

Explore reference to the fig tree and fruits in the Gospel.

- Matthew 7: 16-19
- Mark 11: 12-14, 20-21
- Matthew 21: 18-20

## THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT (YEAR C) Sunday 23 March 2025

### *Exploring online*

Widen your exploration of Luke's parable of the fig tree by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Bible verses about fig trees
- Gardening in the Bible
- Agricultural metaphors in the Bible

### *Drawing on experience*

The image to stimulate reflection on Luke's parable of the fig tree is *gardening*. Draw on your own experience of gardening. For example:

- How much of a gardener are you (include pot plants)?
- When have you observed gardeners at work?
- Do you attend to gardening programmes on radio or television?

What have you learned from gardening?

### *Creating and making*

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by Luke's parable of the fig tree or by the image of gardening.

- Create a collage of gardening tips and illustrated advice.
- Make a poster of pictures of fruitful trees and other plants.
- Make a display of what local people have said about their love for gardening.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of Luke's parable of the fig tree or on the image of gardening.



## EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales.



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