

The scripture lesson today tells the parable of the fig tree. A fig tree is a prolific bearer of fruit having only two months out of the year that it doesn't bear fruit. It was often planted in the vineyards as a safeguard. If the vineyards didn't produce well, then the owner could count on the fig tree to provide fruit for market. All was not lost. The fig tree in the parable was not bearing fruit and the vineyard owner was ready to cut it down. However a vineyard worker asked the owner to give the tree another year and he would work on the tree to see if it could produce fruit.

There are several things that we can learn from the parable of the fig tree. The first is "uselessness invites disaster". We are to be "useful for God". Being useful does not necessarily mean doing "big" things. Sometimes it is the little things that are actually the most useful.

I would like to read a story by Alexander Whyte of St. George's Church, Edinburgh.

Being in service in the ordinary everyday things we are in service of God. If we are kind, if we help our neighbors in time of need, it doesn't seem like much but we are serving God. We are being useful. Another way to look at it is through goodness. For Jesus, goodness was always a positive thing. People often say "I never did any harm to anyone"

thinking this establishes their claim to goodness. But it isn't "have you done no harm?" but "what good have you done?" what did you put into life?" George Bernard Shaw put it this way, "I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community. And so long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die for the harder I work the more I live." Put more into life than what you take out.

In a way, it is the same as saying "if you are going to talk the talk you need to walk the walk". Actions quite often speak much louder than words.

But maybe the most important part of the parable is that the tree, though it was "useless" in the eyes of the vineyard owner, had someone on its side, someone who hadn't given up on it and was willing to work for another year to help the tree become useful. Our someone is Jesus. He has a great belief in us. He expects a lot but he believes that we are capable of the highest goodness and usefulness. He continues to believe it even if we let Him down. Knowing this should fill us with the determination to not fail but to aim to fulfill that belief. We need to have the faith that this is true, that even if we stumble along the way to goodness, he still will believe in us. So as you

go through your week remember to be “useful”, to be “good” and that we are loved unconditionally by our Savior, Jesus Christ.