

**Third Sunday of Lent C - 2019**  
**Ex.3.1-8,13-15///1Cor.10.1-6,10-12///Luke 13.1-9**

→one day a young girl brought her new boyfriend home to meet her parents.

→the meeting was awkward and after a while it was clear that the parents didn't approve of this young man...finding hardly any good qualities about him at all.

→when the parents had the opportunity to talk to their daughter later, by herself, the girl's mother said to her daughter.... "dear, he just doesn't seem like the right person for you...your father and I just don't find him to be all that nice."....are you sure he's a nice person?

--to which the daughter answered.... "of course he's a nice person...if he wasn't why would he be doing 500 hours of community service."

→now it's a bit of a stretch to say "community service" fits into the theme of today's readings...but our gospel this weekend reminds us not to be like the fig tree in Jesus' parable.....

→instead we are to produce good fruit and good works

→today we hear of a man who plants a fig tree in his vineyard...AND for 3 years the man comes seeking fruit and finds none///so he declares the tree useless and wants it cut down

---BUT the vinedresser [as we hear] has a better idea!

→rather than give up on the tree, he decides to cultivate and nourish it //  
...*even though it appears to be useless*, the vine dresser decides to continue to take care  
of it /// in the hope that it will bear fruit.

----rather than cutting it down, he decides to continue to offer it new life

→NOW IN A WAY...you and I are somewhat like that fig tree at times....

→BECAUSE sometimes we don't always bear forth the fruits we have to others  
in a way that we should////we are always willing to offer the fruits we have to others

→how often are we taught...from early on...to look out for ourselves and no one  
else////that it's a mean jungle out there...so you better be sure to take care of yourself first

→our world and society...quite frequently...reinforces the notion that the  
poor, the homeless or those less fortunate....really isn't our problem...it's their own fault  
they are that way

→and more common today is the thought that if we have been taken  
advantage of, or cheated, or insulted then be sure to get even...strike back...stake your  
claim....

→and these are just some of the ways that cause us not to bear forth our good  
fruits

→these are the struggles and challenges we all face and experience....and these  
are the struggles and challenges we need to continually work at...in the same way that  
one prunes a tree...we need to prune ourselves...

→and I think that is the "voice of challenge" for us today in this gospel parable.

PAUSE

→quite simply...this season of conversion...this season of discipleship with Christ...this season of getting our spiritual lives in focus...is not about cutting down trees as much as it is about pruning and cultivating ourselves...

→this time of Lent, is a special time in which the Lord is asking us to try harder to share our fruits with those who need them...to answer the call to offer our rich fruits to those who need them the MOST

→and to look more closely at our lives, in which through our selfishness, our jealousy, or our unkindness we don't offer our fruits to others in the way that we should

PAUSE

---this is a time for us to convert of our hearts to God...

---about cultivating and nurturing the love of God that is a part of who we are and sharing our fruits with those around us

→close to three weeks ago...on Ash Wednesday...we heard St. Paul...remind us that "now is the acceptable time...now is the day of salvation."

→in the coming weeks...this **acceptable time** will become more and more important as we ready ourselves for Easter.

→as the fig tree in the gospel needed some cultivation and care to bear fruit

→so too you and I also need some cultivation, God's cultivation and nourishment so that we can continue to bear the fruits we have to one another as well

→and so, perhaps now **IS** the time to realize just that...to realize that it is never too late or early to turn our hearts to God

→and....to work NOW on bearing our fruits to one another, so that with grace and gladness we will more fully enjoy the fruits of the resurrection....the resurrection of Christ and our own resurrection....

Because after all....isn't that.....what our purpose here on earth is all about!...