



Full to The Brim ~ An Expansive Lent

Tuesday Small Group Session

Third Week of Lent – *You Are Worthy*

Gathering /Welcome/ Ground rules

Introduction/Background for *Full to the Brim* from Sanctified Art:

Full to the Brim reminds us to live fully—as we pursue justice and hope, or express grief and gratitude. And so, this Lent, let us trust—fully—that we belong to God. Let us increase our capacity to receive and give grace. Let us discover the expansive life God dreams for us.

Sharing the Scripture

Luke 13:1-9

13 Some who were present on that occasion told Jesus about the Galileans whom Pilate had killed while they were offering sacrifices. **2** He replied, “Do you think the suffering of these Galileans proves that they were more sinful than all the other Galileans? **3** No, I tell you, but unless you change your hearts and lives, you will die just as they did. **4** What about those eighteen people who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them? Do you think that they were more guilty of wrongdoing than everyone else who lives in Jerusalem? **5** No, I tell you, but unless you change your hearts and lives, you will die just as they did.”

6 Jesus told this parable: “A man owned a fig tree planted in his vineyard. He came looking for fruit on it and found none. **7** He said to his gardener, ‘Look, I’ve come looking for fruit on this fig tree for the past three years, and I’ve never found any. Cut it down! Why should it continue depleting the soil’s nutrients?’ **8** The gardener responded, ‘Lord, give it one more year, and I will dig around it and give it fertilizer. **9** Maybe it will produce fruit next year; if not, then you can cut it down.’”

Commentary | Rev. Larissa Kwong Abazia

“Wait a little longer.”

“Work hard to show what you are capable of.”

“Trust me...”

As a Person of Color, I hear these comments on a regular basis. On my best days, this commentary ignites a fire to change the systems and structures that regularly oppress marginalized people. Other times I wonder, “Am I being pacified *just enough* to stick around?”

The first thing I want to know is why a fig tree is in the midst of a vineyard. The tree would not be of primary focus in a field cultivating grapes, apparently planted only so that no inch of the ground is squandered.

Many of us experience the world as a fig tree in the midst of grape vines. We are placed in fields not meant for us and yet expected to thrive. People discount and doubt us, threatening to cut us down if we don’t produce in the ways that have been defined *on our behalf*. We are afterthoughts demanded to bear fruit or be destroyed.

The story of the fig tree reminds us that the world’s expectations do not need to be ours. The gardener puts their faith in that which they have no control. Digging a bigger hole and filling it with manure, they tend to the tree with everything it needs to grow into its purpose. Perhaps this means bearing figs. Or maybe it provides shade for the laborers during the harvest, an opportunity for the gardener to tend to the fields in a new way, or transformation of the owner’s ability to see beyond the commodification of the land.

Those of us living a fig tree existence are invited to be nourished and tended to so that, in time, we grow into our purpose. People with power are reminded to disrupt their knowledge of how the world works and their complicity in earthly systems and measurements so that everyone has an opportunity to thrive. And still others provide nurture in solidarity, trusting that intentional care will lead to new life.

Together, we invest in a fruitful Creation.

Discussion

Share impressions of the scripture and commentary.

Is God the gardener or the vineyard owner or both?

Jesus’ audience for this parable was seeing a world full of senseless violence and trying to figure its meaning, and Jesus brought them a message to look inward and repent instead. How does that connect with you in today’s world?

Introducing the Wellness Wheel - Reflective Assessment Tool

In our time together, we are going to introduce the Wellness Wheel Reflective Assessment Tool and hope that you will try using it in the coming week. This tool was created in support of the Full to the Brim – An Expansive Lent curriculum. An expansive life comes from right relationships with God, yourself and others, which in modern terms is a lot like the repentance message that Jesus provided in this week’s scripture. The assessment tool is offered as a process to nurture our inner fig tree...

For leaders: [Share the Zoom screen to show the Wellness Wheel and read the questions that correspond to the topics on the wheel. Poll session participants about 2 sections of the wheel that have particular resonance tonight. Hopefully the group will have some overlap of topics, and then can do breakouts discussing the questions associated with 1 topic for 5 minutes. After the 5 minutes in breakouts, reconvene the group and spend a few minutes sharing the experience discussing the questions.

Closing Prayer

Dear God,

These days we are not always patient, and we want immediate results for our lives and for others – resolution of the pandemic, cessation of the war in Ukraine, justice for all. Trees grow slowly, need pruning and fruit takes time to develop and mature. The same is true for ourselves. Lord, you are the gardener, who cultivates and nourishes us. We pray for the patience to wait for answers, the openness to be pruned, and the clarity to turn away from sin and toward you, so that we are more fruitful, to your glory.

Amen



You Are Worthy | Lauren Wright Pittman
Block print with oil-based ink