

Mark 11: 20-26

20 In the morning as they passed by, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. ²¹Then Peter remembered and said to him, 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered.'²² Jesus answered them, 'Have faith in God. ²³Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, "Be taken up and thrown into the sea", and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you. ²⁴So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. ²⁵ 'Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.'

Meditation: The fig tree continues to provide the basis for spiritual reflection. This time it is all about the power of faith and prayer being answered. We are told that whatever we ask of God in prayer, we will receive **if we have faith**. This even applies to things that seem impossible (the metaphor of moving mountains). Yet, effective prayer is dependent on two things.

First, what we ask for is not just about what suits our fancy or serves our desires oblivious of how it affects others. Rather what we pray for must be in accordance with God's will (notice that Jesus does not ask for a different fate than the one he is heading for). God's will is not about divine interference with the chance randomness of a free universe or eliminating the particular physical and mental vulnerabilities that make up our humanity. God's will is, rather, that powerful love transform our hearts and lives and through us the lives of others. God's will is that we are able to experience blessing and be a blessing to others no matter what we suffer or go through. Prayer can heal us in all kinds of remarkable, unexpected ways if we are spiritually open.

Second, 'Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone...'
Only then will you hear the voice of a receptive, forbearing, forgiving God who answers prayer. Forgiveness is love and forgiveness opens the door to richer experiences of love.

Do you have faith? How do you deal with your doubts? How do you work through your anxieties, your grievances and your fears? Do you simply shelve them, or do you engage them in prayerful communion with God? Do you engage them with a spirit of forgiveness as you seek out some accountability with those you may have issues with?

This time of Covid-19 can ramp up our struggles with our doubts, our anxieties and our grievances with others. Finding faith, especially when so much is uncertain looking forward, is also a great challenge. It's easy to flail around spiritually. This is a time to go deeper and build ever more solid roots to cultivate the kind of inner posture to face the uncertainty with an open spirit (forgiveness is about openness in one's heart).

Prayer: Lord God, I am a believer, but I am a doubter and a worrier also. I can't help it. Life is too uncertain. Bad things have happened to me and those whom I love. The future has many variables beyond my control. But I also want to take seriously your promise to move mountains in my life if I pray persistently with faith, in accordance with

your will, and in a spirit of forgiveness. Show me your will, Lord God. Give me your Spirit of grace and inner peace. And give me a faith with teeth in it; Amen.