

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, September 29, 2020
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“My Gerber Daisies”

READING: Mark 11:12-14, 20-23 – The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Then he said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard him say it. In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. Peter remembered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!” “Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. “I tell you the truth, if anyone says to the mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.”

I love Gerber daisies! I love their big blossoms and their bright monochromatic colors. And, they blossom all summer long into the fall. Last summer I had two plants that I planted in the space in front of our house, and they were beautiful. Much to my surprise, they made it through the winter. This spring I noticed some green shoots coming out where I had them planted last year. At first, I thought they must be weeds, but, no, as they opened up, I saw they were Gerber daisies. I was delighted. I had no idea they were perennial.

So, they became big and lush. I fertilized them, made sure to water them when we got dry, and waited patiently for the first blossoms to open. I waited...and I waited...and I waited some more! I am STILL waiting! Those two plants have not put out a single blossom between them. I had planted two Gerber daisies in my planters by the front door, and they have been most fruitful, new blossoms opening up on a regular basis. But the two using up the soil are doing nothing colorful. They are green and healthy...and totally sterile. No fruit. No joy!

In our text Jesus makes an object lesson of a fig tree. He makes a show of looking for fruit on a leafy fig tree. When he finds no fruit, he says that it may never produce fruit again. Later in the day, as they pass that same tree, Peter notices that it is totally withered. When he says something to Jesus about it, Jesus responds by talking about faith, trust, and action. He wants his disciples to see and remember the lesson: they are to trust in the power of God to accomplish the mission he will soon send them to accomplish.

Did you notice that Mark tells us it was not the usual season for fig trees to bear fruit? Doesn't that seem odd to you? Jesus had no earthly reason to expect to find fruit on that tree in the spring of the year. Figs have fruit in late summer, everybody knew that. But Jesus is impressing upon his disciples that by God's power and purpose, they are to trust that when the odds are against them, when they seem weak and powerless before those who hold power and position, they should not be afraid. Rather, he wants them to be confident that the Gospel and the Holy Spirit together will cause remarkable things to happen. They will see and experience miraculous things, do miraculous things, and see the Church grow in spite of fierce opposition.

I've talked repeatedly to those two daisy plants in the last month or two. I urged and encouraged them, tried to shame them, and generally chastised them for being so boring. I've even thought about chopping them out. But I think I'm going to leave them be to see if they'll make it through another winter. For all I know, it took all the energy they had to survive the winter. Maybe they just didn't have the strength to put out blossoms, too. I'm going to wait and see.

God wants us to trust not in our own abilities and understanding. We won't accomplish much in the Kingdom if we rely on our own power. But, if we trust in him and in his Word, we will see remarkable things. He urges us to love the unlovable, help the helpless, share with those in need, and to speak his name and his Gospel to those he puts in our paths. Nourished and nurtured by his love, we can bear rich and abundant fruit for Jesus, in season and out. God bless you in that pursuit. Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):

There will be NO Saturday service on OCTOBER 10. Pastor Woods' son, Kyle will marry Makayla Robinson that evening, so the Sanctuary and both pastors will be unavailable.

There will be another DRIVE-IN worship service WITH COMMUNION on SATURDAY, October 17, 5:00 P.M. Come in the safety of your vehicle, tune in to 87.9 FM, and worship the Lord with us. The service will conclude with Communion and the Dismissal Blessing to send you on your way. If it's been a while since you last had opportunity to receive the Sacrament, come.

We would once again put out a plea for those who are "techies" to consider volunteering to learn from Ryan Dietrich the process by which we broadcast our service on the Internet. We need 3 or 4 people so everyone can take turns, especially Ryan! Consider it, then act!