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28 Friday

FRIDAY, Week 8 of Year

1 Peter 4: 7 - 13

Ps 95 : 10 - 13

Mark 11: 11 - 26

The gospel story about Jesus putting a curse on a fig-tree in Jerusalem is a very strange incident in many ways. For one thing, fig-trees in Palestine don't have fruit on them until summertime, and Jesus must have known this. So, even though He was hungry that morning before Passover-time (as St Mark says), why did He seem to expect to find fruit and be so annoyed or even angry at not finding any ? As told by St Mark, this incident is closely linked with His cleansing of the Temple area, angrily chasing away the traders there and accusing them of creating a den of thieves in His Father's house of prayer. It's only after this that St Mark tells us the ending of the fig-tree story, when next morning Peter draws attention to the fact that the fig-tree has died. St Mark has made a kind of sandwich of the two incidents. And as he goes on in the next few verses to talk about the power of faith and of prayer, it's clear that both events have great symbolic meaning. It is Jesus claiming and showing the working of God's power through Himself.

People struggle really to believe that faith can move mountains and that prayer is answered. Don't we trust what He said ? Maybe we also struggle to accept that Jesus really was fully human, moved by the same emotions we all have. The fig-tree is a parable, and Jesus really was annoyed and angry at disrespect shown to His Father, at refusal to accept Him.

Jesus understands me better than I know myself. He forgives first, as He loves first.