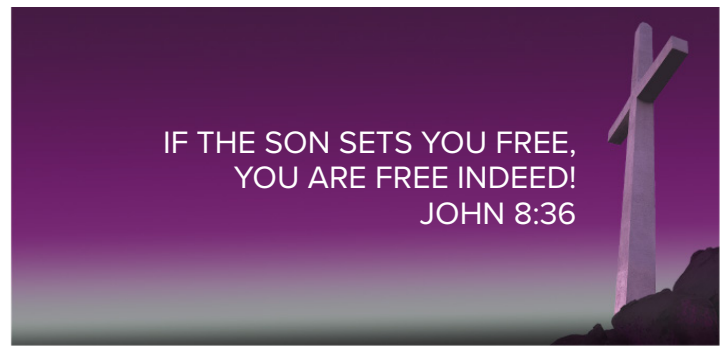


Jesus IOI

“Grace Thoughts”



A short devotional to help get you excited about Jesus!

“Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered.”—Mark 11:21

When I was a little girl, my family lived in Buenos Aires, behind an Adventist Publishing House. In spite of living in the city, we had the unusual blessing of having a backyard with fruit trees. Among them, we had a huge fig tree, which bore hundreds of sweet and large figs each year. We monitored the tree closely, looking for the early figs which we called brebas, that would appear much earlier than the rest of the crop. They were so sweet!

Coming back to Jerusalem from Bethany, Jesus became hungry (Mark 11:12). “Seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs” (verse 13). We are clearly told that it was not the season for figs, but this particular tree had the appearance of fruit; sometimes early figs were found along with the leaves. All of a sudden, “Jesus, meek and mild” seems to turn into “Jesus, mean and wild,”* right in front of our eyes! And He makes a disturbing pronouncement “May no one ever eat fruit from you again!” (verse 14). Jesus appears irrationally angry, but in fact He is using the fig-less tree to enact a parable, to teach something really important to the disciples. In the prophetic utterances of the Jewish Scriptures, the fig tree represented Israel. But when Israel was not fulfilling its purpose to represent Him to the nations, God spoke against them in terms of a dried-up fig tree: “I saw your forefathers as the earliest fruit on the fig tree in its first season. But . . . their root is dried up. They will bear no fruit” (Hosea 9:10, 16). The cursing of the fig-less tree was an enacted parable of judgment on the system’s fruitlessness and hypocrisy. After this, Jesus cleansed the temple (Mark 11:15-18), judging what they had done with it. The following day, as they passed by, Peter said “Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered” (verse 21), thus completing the enacted parable. The temple had become like the barren fig tree, a fruitless institution. In this way, Jesus announced that God will not tolerate exclusivity, religious pride, and hypocrisy among His people.

** Mark Galli uses this phrase as the title of his book that studies troubling passages in the Gospel of Mark.*