

Fourth and Final Year!

Reading: Isaiah 5:1-7

*"What more could have been done to
My vineyard that I have not done in it?" (Isa 5:4)*

A fruitless Christian is a self-contradiction. Fruitfulness means reproduction. We are saved to save others, blessed to bless others. Jesus says, "I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit" (Jn 15:16). Let's not forget our basic calling which is to fish men for Christ (Mt 4:19). Fruitbearing is not an option but an obligation. Fruitlessness may be due to laziness, but it's actually called "wickedness" (Mt 25:26).

At that time of the year when Jesus approached the fig tree, edible figs were still about six weeks away, but the bland fruit must have been there (Mk 11:13). If leaves alone appeared, without the early figs, that tree would bear no figs that year. Jesus cursed the tree because of its pretence. Oftentimes we deceive ourselves by exaggerated or generalised statements about what we do for the extension of God's Kingdom. The day of reckoning is near. Like the five-talented and two-talented men, we must be able to submit a factual account of what we did with the spiritual, physical and material blessings the Lord has bestowed on us (Mt 25:20,22). "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded" (Lk 12:48).

In this incident the Lord cursed the tree instantly. But in the parable of a fig tree He narrated elsewhere, a grace time of one year was given after three years of fruitlessness (Lk 13:6-9). May be this is your fourth and final year! Invest your time and talent for the winning of souls. Obey your missionary call without further delay. Give up your small ambitions of this life for eternal reasons. Involve yourself in personal soulwinning and neighbourhood evangelism. If you are still indifferent, the tree may be cut off or the vineyard given to prospective vinedressers (Mt 21:40,41).

The tens of thousands of people in Iran, when they went to bed on the 25th December 2003, would have never thought that they would leave this earth due to an earthquake before the dawn of the 26th, and would not enter 2004! Whoever thought that 17000 people would die and many thousands be badly affected due to a sudden leakage of poisonous gas in the Union Carbide factory of Bhopal in Central India on December 2-3 in 1984? Let's renew our commitment and make our consecration to God and His work more meaningful before we enter another year. If we abide in Christ, we cannot but be fruitful! (Jn 15:5).

*Must I go — and empty-handed? Must I meet my Saviour so?
Not one soul with which to greet Him? Must I empty-handed go?*

(C.C. Luther)