“Why Cumbereth it the Ground?”

Introduction:
A. Jesus gave Jews back to back lessons on repentance and responsibility.
   1. Repent or perish. (vs. 2-5).
   2. Produce or be cut down – The fig tree parable (vs. 6-9).
      a. Fig trees were common where Jesus lived (Mark 11:13ff; John 1:48)
      b. Like a fig tree, God had planted and nurtured the Jews, his chosen - like Christians today.
      c. Like a fig tree, God looked for fruit and found none - like many today.
      d. Like a fig tree, God gave them opportunities to repent and produce - like many today.
B. Jesus illustrated three great lesson about our opportunities in this parable.

Discussion:
I. God Gives Us Opportunity to Produce. (vs. 6-7).
   A. This fig tree was blessed by its owner.
      1. Enjoyed life in the vineyard.
      2. Enjoyed care of the vine dresser.
      3. Enjoyed soil and fertilizer.
   B. This fig tree disappointed its owner.
      1. Ignored responsibility to bear fruit.
      2. Cumbered the ground - used space, food, moisture.
      3. Burdened the rest of vineyard by taking and not giving.
      4. Not because produced less than another, but did not do what it could.
         a. In parable of sower, all good seed did not produce same amount of fruit. (Matt. 13:23).
         b. In parable of talents, one talent man not expected to produce five talents. (Matt. 25:14-30).
   C. This fig tree is typical of so many professed Christians today.
      1. All they are doing is using up the ground – to them Jesus would say, “Why cumberest ...”
      3. Accept benefits of citizenship without its responsibilities (Rom. 13:1-7)
      4. Accept benefits of home without its responsibilities. (1 Cor. 7:3)
         a. Benefits of husband and wife.
         b. Benefits of parents and children.
      5. Accept benefits of being in Christ without its responsibilities. (cf. Tit. 2:11,12)

II. God Gives Us Opportunity to Repent. (v. 8-9).
   A. The fig tree had a second chance - opportunity to repent.
   B. We all need and have a second change.
      1. All have sinned. (Rom. 3:10, 23)
      2. All need repentance. (Acts 17:30).
      3. All given opportunity to repent. (2 Pet. 3:9).

III. God Limits Our Opportunity to Produce and Repent.
   A. Owner’s long-suffering was limited for the fig tree. (“Three years”; "this year”)
   B. God’s long-suffering was limited for Jewish nation. (Matt. 23:34-37)
   C. God’s long-suffering was limited for people in Noah’s day. (cf. 1 Pet. 3:20).
   D. God’s long-suffering was limited for “that woman Jezebel” (Rev. 2:20-23).
   E. God’s long-suffering is limited for us.. (Acts 17:31; 2 Pet. 3:10)

Conclusion:
A. Are you producing? Or merely using up the ground?
B. How long do you think the Lord will put up with it?