Sermon: **Leave it alone, just one more year** (Luke 13.8)

We had strawberries in our garden – lots of space, not much fruit. So we removed the plants.

Luke 13.6-9 was a worse situation – fig-tree in wrong place, no fruit for three years! Yet, TEXT.

One last chance. It should have already been cut down – for burning or some woodcraft.

What are we to make of this story? It is clearly not about gardening.

It is sandwiched between warnings about repentance (***cut them down***!) and the healing of a woman on a Sabbath, against Jewish law (***leave her alone, just one more day!?***).

Jesus is saying that continued ‘doing nothing’ is not in God’s will. We must be fruitful.

This is true for us as individuals, and as a church. We know this already. However as fruitfulness looks different for each situation, we might use this as an excuse – I am/we are doing all I/we can!

In Māori Language Week I should learn more Te Reo, but I do nothing about it. Are we the same?

I should … read the Bible more, give more, pray more, use less plastic, power, petrol…

We should … do more for the community, encourage more to come, have better pastoral care …

Is God an indulgent father, letting his children abuse his love? God is patient TEXT. But not indulgent.

If we profess to love God then this must show in our actions, ie fruitfulness.

The man looked for figs (v6). So fruit must be appropriate for who we are, *not what we would like to be*. Lemon trees do not give apples! Daffodils do not grow on rose bushes!

I cannot tell you what *your* fruit should be; but together we discover what our *church* fruit should be.

And that fruit will change over time. Someone who gave generously to the church might not be able to living in a rest-home room. Someone who used to drive the van might now be unable to do so.

Opawa Methodist Church that once had a thriving youth work now focusses on older people.

NB: it is the gardener (= Holy Spirit) who acts on the tree - **I will dig round it & put in some manure** (8).So **d**on’t grit your teeth & try harder in your own power, but let God show you how to be more fruitful.

Do this now, soon; TEXT, God might not wait forever!