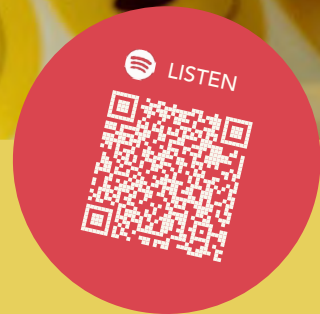


Wednesday, March 19, 2025



Day 13

“Early in the morning, as Jesus was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, ‘May you never bear fruit again!’ Immediately the tree withered.”

—MATTHEW 21:18-19 (NIV)

Reflect

It’s hard not to feel a little skeptical of all those perfectly happy pictures on social media. Life is so much more complicated than sunsets and whatever the “TSA tray aesthetic” is supposed to be. And yet, there’s this odd pressure to share only the shiny moments, like, “Look at me! I’m thriving! Definitely not crying in the car over something completely trivial!”

Honestly, the realest post would probably be something like, “This is my life, and it’s an absolute dumpster fire right now,” and then resisting the urge to slap a filter on it.

There is so much pressure to “just be happy,” but life’s messy. And that’s okay—because maybe, just maybe, everyone else’s mess isn’t as polished as it looks either.

Respond

Sometimes I just like to yell, “NOT TODAY, BARBARA!” Don’t give into the pressure of happiness if you are really not feeling it. Because some days, the truth is I only have the capacity to be sad or mad or frustrated because my life is already enough on its own. Try yelling it (at non-human objects) next time you feel the pressure to perform and be happy (and then put your phone down and go get a snack).



Blessing for when this pain doesn't make sense

*You're fumbling around for answers,
reasons, meaning.
And so far? Nothing.*

*Why you?
Why them?
Why now?*

*Will this get better?
Is relief on the horizon?*

*So maybe you're wondering:
if this pain can't make sense,
can it at least matter?*

*Blessed are you, fragile as you feel,
too weary to reach for hope,
but still quietly whispering, "Help."*

*Blessed are you who know:
some things can be fixed,
and some things just...can't.*

*Blessed are you who admit:
life isn't always getting better.
Sometimes it's just hard.*

*Here in the pain and uncertainty,
may we search for beauty, meaning...together.*

*Not to solve or erase the pain
(because wouldn't that be lovely),*

*but to remember beauty
and sorrow coexist.
And that doesn't mean you're broken
or that you've been forgotten.*

*No, you are seen—right here,
where hope and disappointment,
joy and pain
all co-exist.*

*You are not alone.
Not now. Not ever.*

*May mercy find you here.
In this.*

Again and again.¹³

¹³ Kate Bowler and Jessica Richie. Adapted from "For When This Pain Doesn't Make Sense" in *The Lives We Actually Have: 100 Blessings for Imperfect Days*. (New York: Convergent Books, 2023). 122-123.