

LENT THREE

Isaiah 55:1-9, 1 Corinthians 10: 1-13

Luke 13:1 -9

GOSPEL READING

***** I speak to you in the name of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.

Today is the Third Sunday of Lent. During Lent we are encouraged to be charitable, reflect inwardly and dig deeper into our spiritual life but lately for me it has been difficult to be fully engaged because world events are making me feel anxious. So I was relieved to read Paul's letter which assures us: "God is faithful and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it... ."

Yet even with this assurance and because we are human, we still have doubts, like how to we reconcile the promise of God's faithfulness to be with us in the times of trouble with what is happening around us now and in the future? The world is in turbulence, conflict and distrust is everywhere. One writer wrote: "Not much has changed since the time of Jesus. We still have tyrants, towers are still falling and tragedies still happen"

We ask ourselves, if God is all wise, all loving, all good, and all powerful why do terrible events happen in the first place?

Perhaps the reason evil exists in our world is because WE have put it there. God made the world "good" and what have we done with it? We have done a miserable job of taking care of the creation He made for us and we have put profit before the wellbeing of people.

The world can often be an unholy and scary place through words, actions, and motives. If God were to rid the world of this plague, at which point would He stop? I think the answer might be - if God ended evil in this world, then none of us would exist! We have all done and said things that have caused hurt to someone or something. We've been selfish and thoughtless at one time or another. Often the hurt we have caused makes us lie awake at night with regret.

But my friends, take heart, because we can come full circle and take comfort in the promises that God will meet us in our moments of sadness, heartbreak and yes, in our joy too.. We know this to be true because we have all experienced His care and compassion for us in good times as well as bad. And, we remember another promise that one day we can look forward to the time when all will be made right.

Luke closes his passage with the parable of the fig tree and we know when Jesus tells a parable, he is telling a simple story with a profound meaning.

The vineyard owner represents God and the gardener represents Jesus. We see the vineyard owner express his disappointment at the fruitless tree. He wants it cut down. The tree has been barren for three years. (Jesus mentions this three year period because for three years John the Baptist and Jesus have been preaching the message of repentance throughout Israel.) However, the compassionate gardener pleads for more time and the Lord of the vineyard responds with patience but warns the tree is on borrowed time.

Like the fig tree, we require patience, time, and the right surroundings to flourish so that our Heavenly Father may pour upon us, generous amounts of grace so we can be fruitful.

Each of us in our own way endeavours to make this world a better place. Some are big gestures but often it is the 'little things' like we talked about with Milton last week that improves our world for our neighbours and ourselves.

If you remember only one thing about my reflection today, let it be the fact we are all on borrowed time and we must live our best life. In our first reading Isaiah wrote: "See the Lord while he may be found and call upon him while he is near...."

Let us pray: "Lord, we remember the Parable of the Fig Tree, a reminder that we are called to bear fruit, not to just exist. Help us be more fruitful in our lives and grow in your love and service. May we not be barren or unproductive but may be fruitful in all we do. Forgive us for the times we have been unproductive and give us the grace to change our ways. Help us to grow in faith and to have the fruit of the Spirit."

In Jesus name we pray: AMEN.

Lynda McCall.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE - LENT 3 - March 23, 2025

Let us pray for the church, and the world and let us thank God for his goodness, saying:
Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

We give thanks for all those anointed as the tillers of our inner garden especially our Bishops and St. James Ministry Team. Grant them the tools to cultivate and satisfy our spiritual hunger and as we continue our journey through Lent, may we draw closer to you though prayer and those acts which bring glory to your name.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

We pray for all those who govern this world, our nation, and in this community, to lead us out of inhumanity and in justice.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

Deepen our roots Lord in your holy ground so that we may not add to the conflicts that swirl around us. We pray for those places consumed by violence, hatred and misery. May we instead be a beacon of your light and hope.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

O God, nurture the seeds of hope in all who suffer in any way. May this day bring them comfort and restfulness and petition you to revive the spirits of those who care for others.

In this moment of quiet, let us pray for all those close to our hearts and those who have asked for our prayers, especially Stan Tyrrell and Bill and Carrie.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

We pray for a peaceful passing of those nearing the end of their life's journey. We pray for comfort and understanding for those who mourn and we remember with love those who have died and are now at peace.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

Jesus, the perpetual gardener, who provides us with the spiritual food and drink to bring us to full flower, guide us in making healthy choices as we continue our Lenten journey.

Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour. AMEN.