

Luke 13:1-9

Please read the Gospel reading (Luke 13:1-9) this homily is based on it.

Introduction

As you look around your community, your friends, your family, have you wondered why it is that some people believe in Jesus, and others don't? Have you wondered after drought and floods have brought such devastation to some, why did some escape the worst; why did some really solid people cop it so hard? Have you wondered that if God is for us, then how come we copped it so hard? What is it that leads some people to start to seek God?

Today's Bible passage in Luke 13:1-9 raises some of these questions and shows us that in the face of persistent rejection, Jesus calls for repentance. Lent reminds us of repentance - repentance is a turning away from something and towards something else. God calls on us to turn away from living life for me, and instead to submit to Jesus as my Lord, my King.

Luke tells us that he compiled an orderly account of the things Jesus did and said. In this passage we hear Jesus refer to 2 tragedies and an unfruitful fig tree.

1. Two Tragedies with a Warning.

In vs. 1 some bring Jesus news "... *about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.*" It would seem that while the Jews were offering sacrifices, some soldiers attacked them and killed some, their blood mixing with that of the sacrifices. The people knew that God rules over all events in our world. So such a repugnant act led some to question if perhaps God allowed this to happen because these Jews were guilty of a great sin. Jesus' answer in vs. 3 is very clear: "*I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.*" In vs. 4-5 Jesus then refers to another tragedy in which 18 people

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were killed when a tower collapsed. Again people wondered if those who died were more guilty. Jesus is again very clear: *“I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”*

It would be absurd to suggest that those whose properties were destroyed in recent floods, or fires were more guilty. The world we live in is subject to catastrophic events; sometimes they may be the cause of construction defects, or poor decisions, but they affect people willy-nilly. However, notice Jesus' warning: *“But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”*

His warning is the point. John the Baptist came with a baptism of repentance. Jesus' message to the people of Israel was: *“The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the good news.”* After Jesus' death and resurrection, Peter said to the people: *“Let all Israel be assured of this: God made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”* (Acts 2:36) And called on the people to repent - that is to cease ignoring or rejecting Jesus, and acknowledge him as their Lord and Saviour.

2. Will the Fig Tree Bear Fruit?

With the 2 tragedies and the call to repentance in mind, Jesus then told the people a parable of the unproductive fig tree. Apparently it may take 3 years for a decent crop of figs from a new tree. The owner looked for figs each year, and after the third year decided to remove the tree. The gardener suggested the owner leave it one more year, while he fertilises it and cares for it. If still no figs, by all means dig it up. The owner agrees. We don't hear the final outcome, but in the Old Testament God often used the image of a fig tree to refer to the nation of Israel which he planted and cared for.

Now, God has sent his King, the Christ, to his nation, Israel. Will they bear the fruit of repentance and honour their King. Luke later records the chief priests

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bringing Jesus to Pilate, the Governor, and shouting: "*Crucify him, crucify him!*" (Luke 23: 21) The fig tree has not produced fruit. The nation as a whole reveals their response to God's call for repentance: "No!".

3. Time for Repentance

The nation's refusal does not end God's plan. Through Jesus' resurrection God installs his chosen King, his Messiah. And Jesus sends his disciples to make new disciples from every nation of the world. At the end of Luke's gospel Jesus commissions his disciples: He told them,

"This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke 24:46-47)

Now God calls all people to repent - to stop living for my desires and goals, and instead to live for Jesus. To pursue his desires, goals, plans. He is the King, and Christians serve him.

In our repentance we recognise Jesus as the rightful Ruler of our life. Having recognised him for who he is, we then share in all the benefits he has secured for us through his death and resurrection. We are forgiven - there is no sin that is too wretched to be washed and cleansed by his blood. We are dearly loved, and we are held secure. Now we stand as brothers and sisters, God's dearly loved children. We share his promised Holy Spirit who is at work in us transforming us into the character of our loving Lord and Saviour. He produces his fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.

Have you come to Jesus, in repentance and have you honoured him as your Lord and King?

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If not, do hear the warning Jesus himself gave: “But unless you repent, you too will all perish.” *Today is time to act.*”

If Jesus is your King, you have the full assurance of sins forgiven. and all the riches of his inheritance. Thank him for making you fruitful in coming to him.

As we live in this world, we share the good times and the bad times with everyone else. The followers of Jesus the King do not get special exemption from the suffering the rest of the world endures. Rather, with our community we know and feel the same pain and anguish. We know the love of Jesus and we can share that with others. Through it all we have the hope of God’s promises to which we cling; firm and secure. Indeed, our eyes are set on a better place. A place where Christ is seated, with all those who love him.