

## SERMON NOTES: Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2025

Text: Luke 13:1-9

Lent 3C

You know, if we read or hear or watch the news enough,  
if we just observe life enough  
we'll very quickly be reminded of what perhaps we already knew.

That tower in Siloam is not,  
and will not be the last tower to fall  
and Pilate is not, and will not  
be the last tyrant to hurt or kill other people.

Tyrants and towers are a reality of our world and our lives.

And they come in all sorts of ways, and circumstances.  
Sometimes it's intentional,  
other times it's accidental.  
Sometimes it's of human origin,  
other times it's the way of nature.

Accidents, disease, crime, famine,  
poverty, war, earthquakes, hurricanes, bushfires.

These are but a few of the tyrants and towers in this world.

Whenever and wherever tyrants act  
and towers fall  
we are faced with the reality that  
well life is fragile, unpredictable, and often tragic.

And often in those moments  
we can be quick, perhaps too quick,  
to look for, and offer easy explanations.

"They got what they deserved."  
"God has a plan."  
"Everything happens for a reason."  
"He/she's in a better place."  
"There's a lesson to be learned here."  
"This was God's will."  
"Someday when we get to heaven we'll know why."

---

Jesus has heard something like these explanations  
from the people who tell him  
about the Galileans whose blood  
Pilate mingled with their sacrifices.  
It sounds a lot like they are saying  
that something bad happened

because they were bad people.

To this kind of thinking  
and all the other simplistic,  
trite, and unhelpful responses in the face of tragedy  
Jesus says, ***“No, I tell you.”***

That is not who God is or how God acts.  
The reality is ---- actions and choices have natural consequences.

Sometimes they are tragedy and suffering.  
Other times they are good fortune and joy.

The reality is ---- good things happen to both good and bad people.  
The reality is ----- bad things happen to both good and bad people.

Tyrants, towers, and God  
if you observe life enough --- show no partiality.

And this seems more than clear in Jesus statement,  
***“Unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.”***

---

***“Unless you repent...”***

I have a feeling that’s not what the people wanted to hear  
or expected to hear from Jesus  
when they told him how Pilate had killed those Galilean worshippers.

I can’t imagine that Jesus’ story (because it is him who brings it up)  
about the eighteen killed when the tower of Siloam fell  
and then his words, “Unless you repent,”  
would have made things any better.

---

We have to be honest about this.  
Jesus’ words are not all that helpful.  
They don’t offer consolation, explanation, or comfort.

“Unless you repent...” is not what we would want to hear.  
Sometimes, however, it is what we need to hear.

You see today’s gospel is not about pastoral care.  
Jesus, to state the obvious, is not acting in pastoral care mode.  
In fact He is being a prophet, pure and simple.

And the one thing Prophets do is speak hard truths,  
truths we often do not want to hear.

In making that statement  
Jesus is looking past the events,  
and is looking with insight into the condition of our lives,  
making as it were a diagnosis, and offering a way forward.

Prophetic words challenge us.  
Sometimes they scare us.  
Other times they make us feel guilty or angry.  
But always, they grab our attention and show the way to new life.

***“Unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.”***

And now we get to the parable.  
The parable gives us an insight,  
as to how we are to understand  
Jesus words.....

Now is the time to examine the fig tree of our life.

Where is our life bearing fruit?  
Where is it not?  
Where do we need to spend time, care,  
energy nurturing life and relationships?

What are our priorities and do they need adjusting?  
Who or what orients our life?  
Are we growing or are we “wasting the soil”  
in which we have been planted?

We are right to hear urgency and necessity in Jesus’ words.

This is not because God is vindictive  
but because life is short, precious, and sacred.

Jesus is more concerned with why people  
do not fully live  
than he is with explaining why people die,  
or tyrants act, or towers fall.

Everyone dies but not all truly live.

The question that seems to emerge especially from the second half of the reading is:

“What do we plan to do with our life?”

And this question is at the heart of Jesus’ call to repentance.

The question underlies  
and guides our Lenten journey.

Repentance is part of the work of our Lenten journey.

To repent can mean to reclaiming our life in its fullness  
the life that has been entrusted to us.

So repentance is the way to life,  
the way of becoming most authentically who we are  
and who, perhaps at the deepest level, we long to be.

What might repentance look like in our life?

Ultimately, repentance is about choosing to live and live fully.

And so we are called to choose,  
and if we find we have made a wrong choice, choose again.

It is never too late.

“One more year,” the gardener told the owner.

That is not about time  
but about forgiveness, grace, love, and second chances.

And that sounds like Good News to me.

That we have the gift of life, which we are called to live fully.  
But that is we find we have chosen badly,  
a second chance is there,  
the chance to turn around and start again to live life.

Sounds like Good News that needs to be shared.