

Our Mission:

To share Christ with the world
and grow disciples for Jesus



Loving God and Loving Neighbor as Ourselves

Background:

In this text, we see the political ramifications of Jesus' ministry. The image of crucifixion and the threats of death are made clear. Nonetheless, Jesus will not allow the powers of this world to dissuade him from the mission his Father has given him. Despite the threats of the civil authorities, Jesus continues toward Jerusalem and the triumphal entrance that will announce his kingdom.

Theology Connection:

We see Jesus respond to what would appear to be the randomness of the universe. We may find ourselves asking, 'Why do bad things happen to good people?' Yet Jesus' response is that God doesn't give up on this world or even we who might be in rebellion against his desires. Knowing us for who we truly are, God's desire is to gather us under his wing. In our freedom we have the choice as to how we will respond. Will we work for good?

Application:

As followers of Christ in this country, there is little price to pay as a follower of Christ. Not so, however, in many corners of the world. Christians are among the most persecuted of all global faiths. Perhaps this week we might want to keep in prayer our brothers and sisters around the world who live under the threat of disorder and even the loss of life. Perhaps we might want to reflect upon their powerful witness to us.

The Text: Luke 13: 1-9, 31-35

13 ¹Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

² Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way?"

³ I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. ⁴ Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵ I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

⁶ Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. ⁷ So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?'"

⁸ "'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹ If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'"

³¹ At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."

³² He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' ³³ In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!"

³⁴ "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. ³⁵ Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you; you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

ADULT

One of the disciplines of Lent is fasting. Fasting can take on many forms and is not only a purposeful choice to avoid food for a period of time. We can fast from TV or sports as well as from a meal or two. Fasting, however, is more than just a deprivation of desires, but an act of solidarity with those who have no choice. Might you consider giving up one meal each week to better appreciate what so many in this world suffer from and struggle to obtain? Might you take a moment to consider how we can be of aid to those in need? (The ELCA World Hunger Appeal is a great place to start!)

YOUTH

Please read Luke 13:1-9,31-35

Have you noticed how some people are quick to associate God's judgment with natural disaster? When a hurricane, or an earthquake, or a tornado hits; people say, "This is God's judgment for sin." That is what I think it going on in our text today. Jesus is having a conversation, with his disciples and people start asking him if the horrible event that just happened is God's judgement for their sins. What do you think Jesus meant when he said, "if you don't stop the violence, you will die, Rome will come in and squash you like a bug?"

He follows it with the parable of the fig tree that doesn't bear fruit. What do you think he meant with that story? I think this parable shows how patient and loving God is, even with stubborn people, or trees.

The good news is, God is not in Heaven with a thunderbolt, just waiting for us to break a law so He can zap us. God is the vineyard owner, investing in us to bear the fruit of love for the world no matter how long that takes.

Let us pray: Dear God, please continue prune us and cultivate us so that we will increase in our capacity to provide the fruit that our neighbors so desperately need. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

CHILDREN'S

Read and Summarize.

In today's story, Jesus tells His disciples a story about a gardener. The story goes like this: An owner of some land wants a gardener to cut down a fig tree because it wasn't bearing any fruit. To "bear fruit" is a fancy way of saying that a tree grows fruit on its branches. Except this tree wasn't growing fruit on its branches and that's why the owner wanted to cut it down. But the gardener said to the owner, "Let's give the tree some more time. During that time, I'll give it some extra special fertilizer and then we'll see how it does. Fertilizer, as you may know, is extra-healthy food for a tree. And the gardener wanted to help the tree bear fruit by giving it some of that extra healthy food. When the owner hears the gardeners plan, he agrees to give the tree another year to bear fruit.

If we pretend that the gardener in the story is like God, then we see that God is helping the tree to grow and bear fruit by giving it better food. If we pretend that we are like the tree in the story, then we might think about what some of that healthy food might be that God offers us. For instance, God's love, wisdom, and patience are all healthy things that can help us grow stronger!

Think:

1. What did you learn from this story?
2. What is your favorite part of the story?

Pray:

Dear God,

Help us to receive Your love, wisdom, and patience. So that we can go out into the world and share Your love, wisdom, and patience with others. Amen!