

The Third Sunday in Lent YEAR C FEBRUARY 28, 2016

The theme this week is a powerful follow on from last week. The issues of suffering, judgment, repentance, compassion, and justice all come together in ways that are both comforting and disturbing. One of the most challenging and important questions we must face today is how we are to respond to suffering. This week the Lectionary leaves us no option to answer Jesus' call to compassion and justice

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

Isaiah 55 : 1-9

We can hear these ancient prophetic words as a summons for ourselves, to put God first, to seek him and listen to him. Like Jesus in today's Gospel, Isaiah calls us to repentance, for God is great and freely forgiving.

Psalm 63:1-8

A psalm of longing for God's nourishing presence, and of thanksgiving for God's satisfying care and life.

1 Corinthians 10 : 1-13

This passage is a reminder of the fate of people who were determined to rebel against God. We, says Paul, should be strong to resist anything tempting us away from the life to which Christ calls us.

Luke 13 : 1-9

Jesus refers to some recent events in warning of the need for repentance. A parable suggests that God always allows us second and third chances to turn to a truly fruitful life.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Isaiah%2055:%201-9%0Acw%20Psalm%2063:%201-9%0A1%20Corinthians%2010:%201-13%0ALuke%2013:%201-9

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

We beseech thee, Almighty God,
mercifully to look upon thy people;
that by thy great goodness
they may be governed and preserved evermore, both in body and soul;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

Merciful Lord,
Grant your people grace to withstand the temptations
of the world, the flesh and the devil
and with pure hearts and minds to follow you, the only God;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

www.churchnewsireland.org

Presider or deacon

As we come to the water of Christ, let us earnestly pray to God who gives drink to all who thirst.

Deacon or other leader

For God's people throughout the world, and for those who gather in the name of Christ.
Lord, have mercy.

For all nations, peoples, tribes, clans, and families.
Lord, have mercy.

For all those in danger and need, and for those who hunger and thirst.
Lord, have mercy.

For the dying and the dead.
Lord, have mercy.

For our city and community, and for all those we love.
Lord, have mercy.

Remembering Saint— — — —, and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

Presider

Blessed are you, God of Israel, who made us an everlasting covenant. Receive the prayers we offer this day for us in our weakness and for all peoples everywhere; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

POST COMMUNION

Lord our God,
you feed us in this life with bread from heaven,
the pledge and foreshadowing of future glory.
Grant that the working of this sacrament within us
may bear fruit in our daily lives;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

God of wilderness and water,
your Son was baptized and tempted as we are.
Guide us through this season,
that we may not avoid struggle,
but open ourselves to blessing,
through the cleansing depths of repentance
and the heaven-rending words of the Spirit. Amen.

Artist of souls,
you sculpted a people for yourself

out of the rocks of wilderness and fasting.
Help us as we take up your invitation to prayer and simplicity,
that the discipline of these forty days
may sharpen our hunger for the feast of your holy friendship,
and whet our thirst for the living water you offer
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

God of the covenant,
in the glory of the cross
your Son embraced the power of death
and broke its hold over your people.
In this time of repentance,
draw all people to yourself,
that we who confess Jesus as Lord
may put aside the deeds of death
and accept the life of your kingdom. Amen.

God of the living,
through baptism we pass from the shadow of death
to the light of the resurrection.
Remain with us and give us hope
that, rejoicing in the gift of the Spirit
who gives life to our mortal flesh,
we may be clothed with the garment of immortality,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Faithful God of love,
you blessed us with your servant Son
so that we might know how to serve your people
with justice and with mercy.
We gather the needs of ourselves and others,
and offer them to you in faith and love,
seeking to be strengthened to meet them.
Shape us and transform us by your grace,
that we may grow in wisdom and in confidence,
never faltering until we have done all that you desire
to bring your realm of shalom to fulfillment. Amen.

God of infinite goodness,
throughout the ages you have persevered
in claiming and reclaiming your people.
Renew for us your call to repentance,
surround us with witnesses to aid us in our journey,
and grant us the time to fashion our lives anew,
through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

Benediction (*allusion to Isaiah 55:11*)

We have experienced Gods' mercy.
We have been filled by God's Word.
We know the steadfastness of God's love.
So, now let the words that go out from our mouths

and the deeds that are lived by our hands return to this sanctuary,
not empty but accomplishing God's purpose,
succeeding in the things for which God sends us into the world.
Go in the name of Christ!

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

This week the readings move us very powerfully from last week's theme, into a "next step". Last week, we were challenged to recognise that faith, on one level, is not a protection from the world's woes, but rather, it is a call to take up the cross, and embrace God's life even when we have to suffer to do so. On another level, though, we were invited to celebrate that faith does lead us into a life that is deeper, richer and more meaningful than one of faithlessness. This week, we are taken one step further – we are to reject the idea that suffering is God's punishment for sin, and blessing (or the avoidance of suffering) God's reward. Rather, we are called to recognise our own need of God's mercy and grace, and to respond by "bearing fruit" – manifesting the life of God's reign, and bringing grace and mercy into the world. This week we are shocked out of our complacency, and challenged to be more determined in our commitment to follow Christ, even as we are assured of the gifts of God's presence and God's provision to fulfil our calling.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world. – C.S. Lewis

GLOBAL APPLICATION: The significance of this week's Gospel reading, in the light of the many natural disasters, acts of violence, and financial struggle in our world over the last few years, is nothing less than obvious. While much can be said – and has been said – about whether these things are God's punishment or not, Jesus closes the book on that discussion very firmly. But, he doesn't close the book on the significance of such tragic events for every person – it reminds us that we all need God's grace and mercy, and that we cannot stand off and debate the pain of others academically while ignoring the part our self-righteousness plays in their pain. There is a sense in the suffering of the poor and marginalised is not a judgement on the them – it is a judgment on those who have allowed the inequalities that made them vulnerable to such suffering. We cannot help but be challenged by the statistics that reveal that those who are the worst hit by climate change, war, and economic crises are the poorest and most vulnerable in our world. Nor can we be anything but challenged by Jesus call to bear fruit by serving and protecting these "least" ones.

LOCAL APPLICATION: There is an unfortunate tendency in our world to turn away from pain – to stop looking, to avoid it and to distract ourselves. And when this doesn't work, we sometimes turn to judgement and self-righteousness. But suffering is, as C.S. Lewis says, God's megaphone to rouse us. It is not that God creates suffering, but that God speaks very loudly through pain. And it's not only our own pain that God speaks through. When others are in pain, God's voice is clear and challenging – calling us repent of our avoidance and self-protection, and challenging us to bear the fruit of caring, compassionate action on behalf of the suffering. While news shows bring the suffering of the world into our homes, it may be that God is speaking to you through these stories to be

more aware of those who are suffering right on your doorstep. Who needs you to release your self-righteousness and complacency and offer them compassion and help right now in your community?

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

By [Walter Brueggemann](#)

Lent is a time for making decisions about God's good news and our life in the world. The decisions pose the question: "What is better?" In Psalm 63, we get an answer, "God's steadfast love is better than life." The psalm evokes a plethora of images: God's fidelity is like water in a weary land; a feast of rich food; a shadow amid the hot sun; a strong hand that keeps one from falling. The psalm invites reflection on God's reliability, for which there is no adequate substitute in our busy world of consumerism.

Corinthians is more concrete. Here the alternative is to "desire evil." The phrase gives Paul a chance to review ancient history as an "example." That memory includes the golden calf (Exodus 32; 1 Corinthians 10:7-8) and murmuring in the wilderness (Numbers 21:4-6; 1 Corinthians 10:9). The "desire of evil" is an alternative of self-sufficiency, of shaping our "gods" according to our convenience. To "desire evil" in our contemporary society is to imagine that with enough power, goods, and control one does not need the gift of fidelity.

Isaiah's poem sets the choice that God's people are always making—free water, milk, and bread, or the rat-race of self sufficiency. "Seek the Lord" is an invitation to abandon self-sufficiency for life in the gospel. Luke, with its two odd case studies, is preoccupied with "repentance" and the call to "bear fruit." The hard part is choosing to live differently. That is always the important part, now as it was then. Life in the rat-race makes us "prey for jackals" (Psalm 63:10) without time to bless and thank God (Psalm 63:6).

SERMON OUTLINE

Lk 13:1-9 There were some present...

People love to talk about the latest news - & esp tragedies... two recent tragedies were a talking point among locals & they told Jesus..

1. Death v1-3: *about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.*

Pilate wanted to improve water supplies in Jerusalem through a new aquaduct – to be financed by Temple monies – much to the displeasure of the Jews. Many Galileans were killed by Roman soldiers as they came to sacrifice at the Temple.

2. Disaster v4-5 – which befell *those 18 who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them* – an otherwise unknown event.. These 2 tragedies raise the question of sin – *were they worse sinners than all other Galileans?* – a great topic for local conversation & debate...

Jesus gives a straight answer & a strong punchline - *'No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.'* - fulfilled in the Conquest of Jerusalem in 70AD.

3. Desperation v6-9:- the parable of the farmer who *v6 had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it & found none.* > *Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?* But the gardener suggests giving it a chance... *let it alone for one more year, until I dig round it and put manure on it. 'If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'*

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God is still the God of the 2nd chance - He wants all to repent & return to Him - 1 Tim 2.4:-
1 Tim 2.4 *God our Saviour desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

May we truly repent & return to Him in penitence & faith...

By Norman Porteous

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

Luke 13:1-9

"Beyond What's Fair," Rev. Dr. Robert Dunham, *Day 1*,
http://day1.org/1758-beyond_whats_fair

"Changing Your Mind, Bearing Fruit," the Rev. Dr. James B. Lemler, *Day 1*
http://day1.org/1033-changing_your_mind_bearing_fruit

"Wanted: Fig Trees that Produce Figs," Pastor Edward F. Markquart, *Sermons from Seattle*.
http://www.sermonsfromseattle.com/series_c_wanted_fig_trees_that_produces_figs.htm

"Missing Is Not Final," the Rev. Dr. Wiley Stephens, *Day 1*
http://day1.org/472-missing_is_not_final

"Could This Be the Year for Figs?" the Rev. Barbara K. Lundblad, *Day 1*
http://day1.org/638-could_this_be_the_year_for_figs

"In the Thick of Blindness," John Jewell,
<http://www.lectionarysermons.com/zun3l.html>

Father Andrew Greeley, Author, Priest, Sociologist: Background and Homily
Links to homilies in Lent
<http://www.agreeley.com/hom10/mar14.htm>

CHILDREN

Worshipping with children - Two talks

One based on the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving in the eucharist and one on the gospel reading.

<http://worshippingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2013/02/year-c-third-sunday-in-lent-march-3-2013.html>

"The Fruitful Life," children's sermon, colouring page. Charles Kirkpatrick, Sermons 4 Kids.
<http://www.sermons4kids.com/fruitful-life.html>

"What Kind of Dirt Are You?" Linda Edwards, The Children's Chapel.
<http://childschapel.org/biblestories/dirt.html>

"Jesus Gives a Fig Tree a Second Chance," Sunday School Lessons: Family Bible Study, art projects, music, stories, etc.
<http://www.sundayschoollessons.com/lent3les.htm>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

The Voice Of God Is Calling
www.churchnewsireland.org

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How Firm A Foundation
Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah
O Master Let Me Walk With Thee
We Shall Go Out With Hope Of Resurrection
How Long?
God Of Justice (YouTube video)
Forever (YouTube video)
God Will Make A Way (YouTube video)
Consider It Joy (YouTube video)

Please commend this resource to colleagues - they simply send an email to churchnewsireland@gmail.com with the message Passwords in the title