

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT
TAKING TIME TO REPENT
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St. Aidan's Episcopal Church
Virginia Beach VA 23452
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LUKE 13:1-9

TODAY IS ONE OF THE READINGS AS THE PREACHER YOU DON'T KNOW IF YOU WANT TO TACKLE. IT IS ONE OF THE READINGS WE MAY ALL LIKE TO SKIP OVER AND SAY LET'S MOVE ONTO SOMETHING ELSE THAT'S ALITTLE EASIER TO DIGEST AND UNDERSTAND. BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT GOD CALLS US TO DO. WE ARE NOT SUPPOSE TO SKIP OVER THE HARD READINGS AND ONLY READ THE ONES WE LIKE, THE ONES WE THINK WE UNDERSTAND WHAT GOD IS TRYING TO TELL US, THE ONES THAT MAKE US FEEL GOOD.

SO AS THEY SAY IN STAR TREK I AM GOING TO TAKE US BOLDILY WHERE NO MAN AND I'M ADDING WOMAN, HAS GONE BEFORE, WE ARE NOT GOING WARP SPEED INTO USING THE PSALM OF THE DAY OR ONE OF THE OTHER READINGS WE ARE GOING WHERE MR SPOOK MIGHT SAY WOULD BE HIGHLY ILLOGICAL, WE ARE HEADED STRAIGHT FOR THE GOSPEL.

AS JOHN THE BAPTIST TOLD US IN ADVENT TO REPENT, HERE WE ARE IN LENT AND JESUS IS TELLING US THE SAME THING, HE IS ALSO SAYING WE NEED TO REPENT. IN THE GOSPEL READING TODAY WE DON'T KNOW WHO JESUS IS EXACTLY TALKING TO IT JUST TELLS US THAT THERE WERE SOME PRESENT AT THE TIME. HE WAS TELLING THEM THEN AND HE IS TELLING US NOW TO STOP ACTING LIKE WE ARE BETTER THEN OTHER'S, BECAUSE WE ARE JUST AS SINFUL. BUT HERE WE ARE WE THINK WE COULDN'T POSSIBLY BE AS BAD AS OTHER PEOPLE, LOOK AT US, WE GO TO CHURCH EVERY WEEK, WE HAVE JOBS, WE HAVE HOUSE'S, WE ARE RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS, BUT YET, CHRIST TELLS US THAT UNLESS WE REPENT AND TURN BACK TO HIM WE CAN PERISH JUST LIKE THE EVIL DOERS IN THIS WORLD. WE ARE NOT ANY BETTER; WE ARE JUST AS SINFUL AS THE OTHER SINFUL PEOPLE IN THE WORLD. AT THIS TIME IN LENT, IN THE THIRD WEEK, WHICH IS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FORTY DAYS OF LENT WE SHOULD BE LOOKING BACK OVER OUR LIVES AND WHERE WE NEED TO MAKE SOME CHANGES, RECONCILING OURSELVES BACK TO THE LORD, REPENTING AND PREPARING FOR THE WAY OF THE CROSS.

JESUS THEN CONTINUES IN OUR GOSPEL READING WITH A PARABLE, THE PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE. WE LISTEN TO THE OWNER TALKING TO THE MAN TAKING CARE OF THE FIG TREE. HE TELLS THE MAN TO JUST CUT IT DOWN IT HAS NOT HAD FRUIT FOR THREE YEARS AND BASICALLY IT IS NO GOOD TO HIM, IT'S WASTING SOIL HE COULD BE USING FOR A FRUITFUL TREE.

THAT'S SOUNDS SO MATTER OF FACT, SO HARSH, IF WE THINK ABOUT THE FIG TREE AS A LIVING PART OF OUR PLANET TO JUST CUT IT DOWN AND RIP UP IT'S ROOTS, IT'S ROOTS THAT REACH DEEP INTO THE SOIL, IT IS LIVING AND AREN'T WE TRYING TO SAVE OUR PLANET, OUR GREENSPACES, AND THE ANIMALS THAT LIVE IN THEM?

BUT MAYBE WE ARE MAKING SOUND WORSE THEN IT IS, LET US LOOK AT THE WAY WE GARDEN. WE PRUNE, WE CHOP, WE WEED, AND WE DIVIDE, WE MAKE ROOM SO THAT THE PLANTS THAT WE LEAVE IN THE GARDEN CAN GROW STRONGER AND HEALTHIER.

IN JESUS' PARABLE THE OWNER OF THE GARDEN OBSERVES A BARREN FIG TREE. REASONABLY, HE ORDERS IT YANKED OUT. BUT THE GARDENER SUGGESTS THAT THE OWNER GIVE THE FIG ANOTHER YEAR. IN THE MEANTIME HE'LL BREAK UP THE HARD EARTH, AERATING THE GROUND AROUND IT SO THE ROOTS CAN BREATHE AND DRINK AND TAKE IN NOURISHMENT. HE'LL PUT MANURE AROUND IT, THAT GOLDEN SUBSTANCE WHICH IS THE VERY GROUND OF LIFE AND FERTILITY - CHANGING THE VERY SOIL NURTURING THE FIG TREE.¹

THAT IS GOOD NEWS FOR US IF WE CAN IMAGINE THAT WE ARE THE FIG TREE UNLESS WE LET THE WEEDS START GROWING AROUND US AND WE CAN'T LET THAT HAPPEN, JESUS SAYS WE ARE TO REPENT BECAUSE YOU DON'T KNOW WHEN THE GARDENER MAY COME THROUGH AND TEAR YOU UP BECAUSE THE OWNER WANTS TO TAKE YOUR LIFE.

I BELIEVE WHEN JESUS IS TELLING US TO REPENT THIS LENT HE IS GIVING US THE TIME TO BE LOVED, NURTURED, AND BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE SO WE WILL RETURN TO HIM A NEW PERSON. BUT MOST OF US LIVE LIVES SO FULL IT'S NECESSARY TO PUSH REPENTANCE INTO THE BACKGROUND, LIKE MANY OTHER BEAUTIFUL AND IMPORTANT THINGS IN OUR LIVES WE TAKE FOR GRANTED AND FORGET ABOUT. I KNOW FOR ME I CAN SAY BETWEEN 40-50 HRS OF WORK IN A WEEK, MY MINISTRY DURING THE WEEK AND EFM, AND THE SUNDAYS I PREACH SOMETIMES I FIND MYSELF IN A STATE OF OVERLOAD AND COULD EASILY SAY I DON'T HAVE TO TIME TO THINK ABOUT REPENTENCE, ABOUT RECONCILING MYSELF BACK TO CHRIST. I KNOW IT'S LENT, MY TIME TO SPEND IN REPENTENCE BUT WHO HAS THE TIME TO SIT AND BE QUIET WITH THE LORD, SURELY NOT ME, BUT JUST SAYING THAT MAKES ME THINK HOW SINFUL I FEEL, SAYING I CAN'T SPEND TIME WITH THE LORD WHICH IS EXACTLY WHAT HE WAS TALKING ABOUT IN OUR GOSPEL READING WE ARE ALL SINFUL.

IT IS SO IMPORTANT TO SPEND TIME WITH THE LORD, WE ALL NEED TO SPEND THAT TIME WITH THE HIM ESPECIALLY NOW DURING LENT AND OUR JOURNEY WITH CHRIST TO THE CROSS.

REPENT, NOW, SAYS JESUS. FROM MATTHEW 25:13 WE ARE TOLD YOU DO NOT KNOW THE DAY OR HOUR. THE SENSE OF DEATH CAN SHAKE PRIORITIES SUDDENLY OUR BUSY DAYS SHRINK IN FEAR WHEN WE THINK ABOUT OUR OWN DEATH. WE WERE JUST TOLD ON ASH WEDNESDAY THAT WE ARE DUST AND TO DUST WE SHALL RETURN. SO WE SHOULD BREATHE IN LIFE NOW, LOOK AT THE BEAUTIFUL WORLD AROUND US NOW AND LET THE HOLY IN US RISE AND BE FRUITFUL NOW.

DURING LENT TAKE TIME TO DEVELOP THE HABIT OF REPENTANCE IN YOUR DAILY LIFE; TAKE TIME TO AERATE AND FERTILIZE THE SOIL OF YOUR LIFE. LENT IS A TIME OF TAKING CARE OF THINGS, WHILE BEING TAKEN CARE OF BY THE LORD. THIS LENT LET US TAKE TIME TO GROW IN THE LORD AND BEAR A FRUITFUL HARVEST.

AMEN