

Third Sunday in Lent March 24, 2019

Year C – the Gospel of Luke

Lutheran

Living the ^ Lectionary

*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

Available on line at:

- ✦ www.bethlehemplutheranchurchparma.com/biblestudies
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Gather and be blessed:

- ✦ **Thursdays at 10 AM:** Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44134
- ✦ **Fridays at 7 PM in a house church setting:** For details, contact Harold Weseloh at puritaspastor@hotmail.com
- ✦ **First Sunday of the month at 11 AM:** St. Philip Lutheran Church, 11315 Regalia Ave., Cleveland, OH 44104
- ✦ **Tuesdays at Noon (8pm Kenya time)** via Zoom to the Lutheran School of Theology - Nyamira , Kenya
- ✦ **On Facebook through Messenger** in a discussion group shared by people throughout the United States, Kenya and Uganda. Contact Harold Weseloh on Facebook Messenger.



<http://www.lrbc.church/archives/2561>

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 823/824 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 500

“May God bestow on us His grace”

With exception of The Cyber Hymnal, the other 12 hymnals listing this hymn are all Lutheran. Although the text and translations for 823 and 824 are the same, respectively by Luther and Richard Massie, the tunes are different. “Es wolle Gott uns gnadig sein”, is the same tune for 823 (LSB) and 500 (TLH), written in 1524. “Elvet Banks”, the tune for 824 (LSB) , was written in 2004 by David Lee. Since TLH was published in 1941, it obviously could not include “Elvet Banks”. This tune is also used for LSB 407, “To Jordan came the Christ, Our Lord” on the Sunday for the Baptism of Jesus, Year C. An extensive background for this tune can be found in the Living the Lectionary lesson for that day in 2019:

<https://bethlehemlutheranchurchparma.com/BibleStudies/46261/DownloadText>

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INyiqiEV9Do> Koine Two comments about this hymn: Lucas Goetz “This song melody definitely is reminiscent of monastic worship, but the words are quite touching.” Judith Rosenow “You did what you could with it, but it's not a pleasant or memorable hymn....sorry....it reminds of some of the odd hymns we sometimes get in church that no one knows or even wants to know....kind of get it over with and hope the next one is better....does the synod make the pastors use these odd songs ?....the hymnal could be lots smaller without them”
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arTnMeK0GR4> “From a festival setting of Divine Service, Setting Five of Lutheran Service Book, designed for churches with smaller musical forces; it is arranged for two-part choir, organ, trumpet, and congregation. This setting was commissioned by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.”
- <http://servicemusic.org.uk/hymntune/index.php> This link will allow you to hear a MIDI version of the tune, “Elvet Banks”

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001
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OT – “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but...”

Psalm – “Will you be angry with us forever?”

Epistle – “let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall”

Gospel – Repent or Parish

Ezekiel 33:7-20; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), Isaiah 55:1-9 (Next week: Isaiah 12:1-6; RCL, Joshua 5:9-12)

“In bizarre (Ezekiel 1), devastating (Ezekiel 15), and even graphic (Ezekiel 16 and 23) terms, the prophet has spoken words of judgment against Judah.

The astonishing rhetoric and poetics have intended to startle the people to attention. The warnings to Judah dominate chapters 1-24. The closing line of chapter 24, before the beginning of the oracles against the nations in 25, reveals the divine intention for all of the stark warnings and denunciations: “they shall know that I am the LORD.” Ezekiel does not present a deity on an ego trip, but a God who wants a faithful people who form a good relationship between themselves and God (Ezekiel 11:20). All of the harsh language and shocking metaphors constitute God’s strategy to awaken the people to their estrangement from God and their own true identity.

Chapter 33 begins a transition in the book of Ezekiel. Verse 21 reports the fall of Jerusalem. This event exposed the false confidence and complacency of the people (Ezekiel 33:24). In the midst of this utter defeat, the words of Ezekiel turn from primarily judgment to restoration. Although Ezekiel had reported God’s word of restoration before chapter 33 (Ezekiel 11:19, 18:31), the predominant theme becomes healing and hope after this chapter. Although Ezekiel does not present as tender a God as Hosea (see Hosea 11), God will reform the community (Ezekiel 37), and work within the people, as a community and individually to enable them to form a relationship with God.

This transition passage contains both threat and compassion...”

- http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3400
Charles L. Aaron, Jr. Associate Professor of Supervised Ministry, Perkins School of Theology, Dallas, Texas

⁷“So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. ⁸If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. ⁹But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.

Why Will You Die, Israel?

¹⁰“And you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, Thus have you said: ‘Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we rot away because of them. How then can we live?’ ¹¹Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?

¹²“And you, son of man, say to your people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him when he transgresses, and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall by it when he turns from his wickedness, and the righteous shall not be able to live by his righteousness^[a] when he sins. ¹³Though I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, yet if he trusts in his righteousness and does injustice, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered, but in his injustice that he has done he shall die. ¹⁴Again, though I say to the wicked, ‘You

shall surely die,' yet if he turns from his sin and does what is just and right, ¹⁵ if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has taken by robbery, and walks in the statutes of life, not doing injustice, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ¹⁶ None of the sins that he has committed shall be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right; he shall surely live.

¹⁷ "Yet your people say, 'The way of the Lord is not just,' when it is their own way that is not just. ¹⁸ When the righteous turns from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it. ¹⁹ And when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is just and right, he shall live by this. ²⁰ Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' O house of Israel, I will judge each of you according to his ways."

a. [Ezekiel 33:12](#) Hebrew *by it*

"...There is more to this passage than a simple call to repentance.

"Ezekiel 33:1-20 forms the larger literary unit and consists of an oracle concerning a watchman. This image is used earlier in the book of Ezekiel for the prophet. As part of a prophetic commissioning, God appoints the "son of man," Ezekiel, as a watchman or lookout or sentinel in Ezekiel 3:16-21. The image or metaphor is used in the book both to describe Ezekiel's prophetic role -- he is to warn people of coming danger -- and to limit the prophet's liability if the people do not listen.

"The watchman's responsibility lies in sounding the alarm and pronouncing the danger. The sentinel would have been stationed in a lookout position and sounded a trumpet upon sight of a threat. The watchman, however, is not responsible for the people's response to the warning. He or she cannot force people to prepare for the threat, to defend the city militarily, to fortify the surroundings.

The watchman's task is to announce impending danger.

The image of the watchman is particularly striking if we consider the literary context of the passage. The passage immediately after our selection, Ezekiel 33:21-22, contains a narrative report of the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. This military intervention serves as a critical turning point in the book of Ezekiel given that the prophetic tone switches here from mostly judgment oracles to promise oracles in chapters 33-48. The occurrence of an image of the watchman just preceding this announcement already sets the tone for impending danger...

"...verses (7-11) include three references to "the house of Israel." We are therefore clear about the communal and national recipient of these warnings. In fact, this collective recipient is able to respond in verse 10 to the divine speech with a question: "how then can we live?" This question, with its accompanying realization that their sins weigh upon them heavily, actually engenders the divine response (verse 11) that concludes this passage. **The people of God have offered a complaint to which God now responds.**

God's intention is not for God's people to die. While the house of Israel is surely threatened with death, God offers repentance and assurance that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked...

The last phrase of ... verse (11) of our passage speaks of God's final question to the house of Israel: "why will you die?" This question reframes the earlier inquiry from Israel: "how

can we live?" It flips the earlier query on its head and emphasizes the consequence of wickedness (death).

Why would you choose death when you can be alive?

To choose to live is to choose to turn back from evil. This verb, "to turn" is used repeatedly in this passage as a reminder of the physical understanding of repentance..."

http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2195 Tyler Mayfield A.B.
Rhodes Professor of Old Testament , Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

Psalm 85; RCL, Psalm 63:1-8 (Psalm 32; RCL, the same reading)

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13 is used in Year B, Advent 2

"TITLE. To the Chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah. There is no need to repeat our observations upon a title which is of so frequent occurrence; the reader is referred to notes placed in the headings of preceding psalms. Yet it may not be out of place to quote Ne 12:46. In the days of David and Asaph of old there were chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God...

DIVISION. In Ps 85:1-4 the poet sings of the Lord's former mercies and begs him to remember his people; from Ps 85:5-7 he pleads the cause of afflicted Israel; and then, having listened to the sacred oracle in Ps 85:8, he publishes joyfully the tidings of future good, Ps 85:9-13.

<https://www.christianity.com/bible/commentary.php?com=spur&b=19&c=85> Charles Spurgeon

Revive Us Again

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah.

85 LORD, you were favorable to your land;
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

² You forgave the iniquity of your people;
you covered all their sin. **Selah**

³ You withdrew all your wrath;
you turned from your hot anger.

⁴ Restore us again, O God of our salvation,
and put away your indignation toward us!

⁵ Will you be angry with us forever?
Will you prolong your anger to all generations?

⁶ Will you not revive us again,
that your people may rejoice in you?

⁷ Show us your steadfast love, O LORD,
and grant us your salvation.

⁸ Let me hear what God the LORD will speak,
for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints;

but let them not turn back to folly.

⁹ Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him,
that glory may dwell in our land.

¹⁰ Steadfast love and faithfulness meet;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.

¹¹ Faithfulness springs up from the ground,
and righteousness looks down from the sky.

¹² Yes, the LORD will give what is good,
and our land will yield its increase.

¹³ Righteousness will go before him
and make his footsteps a way.

“The psalm is a prayer in the midst of crisis for the ancient faith community. They prayed for joy, joy that can come from God's presence in the midst of the community. It is divided into three parts:

God's previous restoration of the community (**verses 1-3**)

A plea for God to bring restoration in a new crisis (**verses 4-7**)

A message of assurance (**verses 8-13**)...

The opening section (**verses 1-3**) of the psalm brings to mind a fond memory of a time when God restored the fortunes of Jacob/Israel and forgave them. God turned from wrath to forgiveness. In **verses 4-7**, the praying community pleads that this same God with whom they have a salvation history will again act to restore so that the community can praise and thank God. "Show us your steadfast love, O Lord, and grant us your salvation" (verse 7)...The third section of the psalm (**verses 8-13**) begins with a reference to the speaker who is revealing a word from God, a word of peace to the faithful. This word is not in the form of direct divine speech, but is in a style characteristic of the psalms and of announcements of salvation in the Old Testament...

Our attempts to interpret Psalm 85 and appropriate its faith for proclamation need to attend to the text's poetic sequence.

The psalm begins by remembering a past when God restored the community. Now the community is struggling again and prays that God will once more bring renewal. The pivot comes in verses 6-7 with the plea for renewal and a demonstration of God's unchanging love.

The remarkable poetic images in verses 8-13 promise just such a renewal. The terms used in those verses (peace, salvation, glory, steadfast love, faithfulness, and righteousness) are terms central to ancient Israel's faith tradition. They characterize God's involvement in the world to bring this faith community to wholeness in life...

Psalm 85 thus models for the community the act of prayer in a time of crisis and the celebration of salvation articulated in the promises of verses 8-13. Such salvation can only come from the God who is present to bless and who comes to deliver.”

➤ http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=928 *W. H. Bellinger, Jr.* *W. Marshall and Lulie Craig Chairholder in Bible, Baylor University, Waco, Texas*

1 Corinthians 10:1-13, RCL, the same reading (2 Corinthians 5:16-21; RCL, the same reading)

“In our passage for study, Paul continues with his warning to the Corinthian believers of the danger of disqualification from the Christian faith. The people of Israel were disqualified, so beware! ...

v1-5. In the opening verses, Paul presents a warning from history... Israel had suffered loss, and this serves as a warning to us that the same can occur if we, like them, flirt with paganism.

v6-10. Paul goes on to further develop his Exodus illustration... So, don't get... into testing God as they tested God... These are the reasons why "God was not pleased" with Israel and so judged them, v5.

v11-12. Paul now completes the point he began to make in v6. He warns the Corinthians that they are in a similar situation to Israel. They are blessed, yet at the same time they are flirting with idolatry and so face judgment...

v13. Finally, Paul encourages his readers with the truth that not all tests of faith are as dangerous as syncretism (a blending or attempted reconciliation of cultures/beliefs)... We don't have to end up neurotic with life. Most of Satan's ploys, his tests of our faith, are easily resisted with the Lord's help. God restrains the tempter's hand and ends the test before it overwhelms us. When we rely on the Lord, we endure..."

➤ <http://www.lectionarystudies.com/lent3ce.html> Pumpkin Cottage Ministry Resources

Warning Against Idolatry

10 For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers,^[a] that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea,² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,³ and all ate the same spiritual food,⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.⁵ Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown^[b] in the wilderness.

⁶Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.⁷ Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.” ([Ex. 32:6](#))⁸We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ([Num. 25:1,9](#))⁹We must not put Christ^[c] to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, ([Num. 21:5-6](#))¹⁰nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. ([Num. 14:2, and 14:29-37](#))

¹¹Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.¹² Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

- a. [1 Corinthians 10:1](#) Or *brothers and sisters*
- b. [1 Corinthians 10:5](#) Or *were laid low*
- c. [1 Corinthians 10:9](#) Some manuscripts *the Lord*

“Christian Baptism is Baptism in the name of the Triune God. The Apostle Paul tells us that there was a Baptism also during the time of the Old Testament. He calls it a Baptism into Moses. "For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor. 10:1,2).

This Baptism sanctified the Israelites, from the oldest to the youngest, to be God's people and to follow Moses, the leader God had given them. The people - among them 600,000 men who were prepared for battle - crossed the Red Sea. Being a rapidly increasing people, there were also many children among them. The cloud and the raging sea constituted the water of Baptism. The people of Israel were saved from Pharaoh's armies. These armies received a baptism by immersion and drowned in the Red Sea.

The Scribes understood the Baptism that Israel received to be a once-and-for-all Baptism, in which future generation of Israelites had been baptized along with their ancestors. Israelites were therefore not baptized. The Gentiles, who were converted to the religion of Israel, were baptized because their ancestors had not been baptized into Moses. This so-called proselyte Baptism was administered to all the members of the family, also to children under the age of eight days. Male proselytes were circumcised after they were baptized. The New Testament does not take a stand concerning this Baptism.

This information concerning the baptismal practices of the Scribes casts light on the historical situation prevailing at the time when Christian Baptism was instituted. Because the New Testament does not oppose the Jewish practice of baptizing the children of proselytes and does not forbid Christians to baptize infants, there is here, along with the many direct Biblical proofs, a support for infant Baptism...”

- <http://www.luterilainen.com/en/read/word-is-the-fountain-of-life/80-baptized-into-moses> *The Confessional Lutheran Church of Finland (CLCF)*

"If in a sermon for seminary any of my students did to the Old Testament what Paul does in 1 Corinthians 10, I would probably tell the student to start over or fail. Paul seems to be playing a bit fast and loose, a bit midrash* and allegory where some key stories from Ancient Israel are concerned. He's got the Israelites getting baptized not just in the Red Sea but in a cloud. He's got them rebelling not against Yahweh but Christ himself. He's got them drinking water from a rock and that rock, too, is said to be Christ Jesus himself. Paul takes us on a backwards tumble into history and is tossing in all kinds of spiritualizing interpretations and allusions as he goes along.

Of course, those of us who confess Paul to be a holy Apostle who has the inspiration of the Holy Spirit on his side are pretty much obligated to say that if this is how Paul chooses to interpret biblical history . . . well, then he gets it right! What's the old line when it comes to Jesus Christ and the Bible: In the Old Testament concealed, in the New Testament revealed. Something like that. But the point is, the whole thing is about Christ. And since we now believe Yahweh is and all along had been the Triune God of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, then we know

that the Person of the Son who became Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God, really was present and involved all along. Paul does not need to insert Jesus where he had not been but rather DISCERN the Christ of God who was there to begin with..."

- https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/lent-3c/?type=lectionary_epistle Scott Hoezee

*"In [Judaism](#), the term [Midrash](#) (plural *Midrasham*) refers to a form of rabbinic literature that offers commentary or interpretation of biblical texts. A Midrash (pronounced "mid-rash") may be an effort to clarify ambiguities in an ancient original text or to make the words applicable to current times..."

There are two types of Midrash: *Midrash aggada* and *Midrash halakha*.

Midrash aggada can best be described as a form of storytelling that explores ethics and values in biblical texts. ("Aggada" literally means "story" or "telling" in Hebrew.) It can take any biblical word or verse and interpret it in a manner that answers a question or explains something in the text..."

<https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-midrash-2076342> Ariela Pelaia "is a graduate student at the Jewish Theological Seminary", NY, NY.

Luke 13:1-9; RCL, the same reading (Luke 15:1-3, 11-32; RCL, Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32)

"Someday I'd like it explained to me why the Lectionary would assign the final verses of a chapter for the week prior to looking at its first 9 verses. Nobody reads the Bible backwards like that so it's not the least bit clear to me why preaching it this way makes any sense, either. In any event, last week many of us preached on Luke 13:31-35 and now this week we find ourselves faced with jumping back to the beginning of this same chapter to pick up the initial section.

Since we are unlikely to get an explanation of why the Lectionary does it this way, let's plunge ahead and take a look at what we have here. And what we have here fits Lent pretty well for some of the same reasons we detailed in last week's set of sermon starter ideas; namely, a text that gets at the urgency of repentance and of getting on board with God's kingdom. As such, what we have here are both words that sound an urgent note and words that give a little hope that God can be patient, too. On the one hand, you never know when the end might come for you so get with the program sooner rather than later and come to Jesus in repentance. On the other hand, even the unproductive fig tree that might otherwise be chopped down might just get another shot at becoming fertile after all.

So don't delay forever but on the other hand, there is a little hope for some level of reprieve, too. Still, the bottom line message is clear enough: you cannot wait forever to get matters of eternal importance right in your life..."

- https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/lent-3c/?type=the_lectionary_gospel Scott Hoezee

"Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling? Not here. This time it's loudly and pointedly.

This passage divides into two parts, verses 1-5 and verses 6-9. I treat them in sequence, but we will see that they relate closely to one another..."

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=530 **Matt Skinner** Professor of New Testament, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.

“The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 13th Chapter”

Repent or Perish

13 There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.* ² And he answered them, *“Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? [Job 4:7; John 9:2; Acts 28:4]* ³ *No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.* ⁴ *Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem?**** ⁵ *No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”*

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

⁶ And he told this parable: *“A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. ⁷ And he said to the vinedresser, ‘Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?’ ⁸ And he answered him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. ⁹ Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.”*

“This is the Gospel of the Lord” “Praise to You, O Christ”

Repent or Perish

* “...Some present at this time told Jesus of certain Galileans who were slain by order of Pilate and whose blood, in the process of their being slaughtered, was mixed with their sacrifices... Only Luke among the gospel writers relates this event. No reference is made to this occurrence by Josephus nor other historians of the time... The bearers of this message seemed to be telling Jesus that they were righteous, not wicked sinners like the slain Galileans...”

- <http://biblestudyworkshop.com/data/Lesson152.pdf>

“There is no account in Josephus, the only Jewish contemporary historian, of this massacre of the Galileans. The oldest account of it is in , about four hundred years after it occurred, and runs thus: "For these [Galileans] were followers of the opinions of Judas of Galilee, of whom Luke makes mention in the Acts of the Apostles, who said that we ought to call no man master. Great numbers of them refusing to acknowledge Caesar as their master were therefore punished by Pilate. They said also that men ought not to offer to God any sacrifices that were not ordained by the law of Moses, and so forbade to offer the sacrifices

appointed by the people for the safety of the Emperor and the Roman people. Pilate, thus being enraged against the Galileans, ordered them to be slain in the midst of the very victims which they thought they might offer according to the custom of their law, so that the blood of the offerers was mingled with that of the victims offered." It is also conjectured that this interference of Pilate in slaying these Galileans was the cause of his quarrel with Herod, who resented his interference until a reconciliation took place by his sending Christ to him as one under his own jurisdiction. "

- https://biblehub.com/sermons/auth/sadler/the_massacre_of_the_galileans.htm M. F. Sadler

** "The **Tower of Siloam** (Greek: ὁ πύργος ἐν τῷ Σιλωάμ, *ho pyrgos en tō Silōam*) was a structure which fell upon 18 people, killing them. Siloam is a neighborhood south of Jerusalem's Old City. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus refers to the tower's collapse and the death of the 18 in a discourse on the need for individual repentance for sin. The incident is mentioned only once in the New Testament, in Luke 13:4, as part of a section with examples inviting repentance contained in verses 13:1-5. ...His mention of the fall of the Tower of Siloam added a nuance to his prior point: accidents happen. Therefore, even in the absence of persecution, death can come unexpectedly to anyone, irrespective of how righteous or how sinful they are. He may have been emphasizing that the time granted by God for repentance is limited..."

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tower_of_Siloam

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

"The first nine verses of the thirteenth chapter of Luke are either sweet or sour, depending on how you look at them. On the one hand, it's sour news that all human beings are sinners who will perish unless they repent. On the other hand, it's sweet news that accidents and tragedies are not punishments for sin. And it's heartening that, in the parable of the barren fig tree, the owner of the vineyard allows the gardener one more year to get the tree to bear fruit. But the parable ends on a sour note: if it doesn't bear fruit, it gets cut down..."

- <https://www.patheos.com/Progressive-Christian/Sadie-Prayer-Dog-Alyce-McKenzie-02-25-2013.html> Alyce M. McKenzie, United Methodist Church

"In the parable of the fig tree (13:6-9), both the fig tree and the vineyard were symbols of Israel. (See Isaiah 5:1-7 and Hosea 9:10.) The owner of the vineyard came to the fig tree looking for fruit, but found none. The owner then delivers a mini-rant to the gardener about the unproductiveness of the fig tree. "For three lo-o-o-ng years, I've been trying to find figs on this fig tree, and I'm fed up! Cut this sorry tree down! It's just taking up space!"

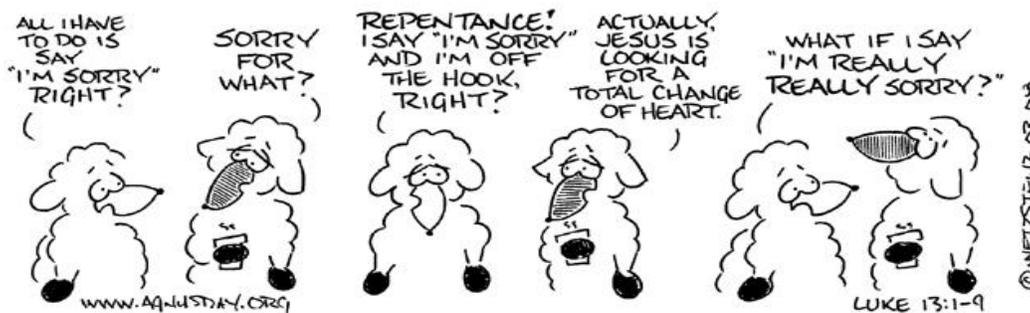
The owner of the vineyard is, of course, God. He's mainly in the vineyard business, but apparently thought it might be interesting to have a fig tree among the grape vines. The fig tree, however, fails to produce fruit. Earlier in Luke, John the Baptist had said to "bring forth fruits worthy of repentance" (3:6) and "every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down" (3:9). Under God's rules--"produce or else"--his unproductive fig tree certainly qualifies for demolition.

If God is the owner of the vineyard, then Christ is the gardener. He replies, "Lord, let it alone"--*kyrie aphen auten*. *Aphen* also means "forgive." It is a word Jesus will use from the cross--"Father, forgive them (*aphen autois*, 23:34).

In other words, the gardener says, "Lord, forgive that dumb fig tree. Turn it over to me for awhile. I'll tend to it and see if we can coax some fruit out of the thing. If it works, great! If not, you will have to be the one to cut it down. I won't be cutting it down myself because I'm in the saving business, not the cutting down business."...

God is, of course, quite correct. It's God's vineyard, and he doesn't want unproductive fig trees taking up space. When it comes to running a vineyard, you have to figure that God knows what he's doing. But Christ protests. Turn it over to me. Let me try some forgiveness on that tree. Who knows? It might work. If it doesn't, I'll forgive it again from the cross. In no case, however, will I ever go back on the forgiveness I have pronounced on the world.."

https://www.progressiveinvolvement.com/progressive_involvement/2010/03/lectionary-blogging-luke-13-19.html John Petty



➤ *Agnus Day appears with the permission of* <https://www.agnusday.org/>

"My friend once preached a sermon on that part of 1 Corinthians in which Paul gives advice—almost certainly in reply to a question the Corinthians had previously sent to Paul on this very idea—on what to do when faced with "food sacrificed to idols." ...

After the service a young woman from the congregation came up to my friend and said, "Thanks for that sermon but I was just wondering something. See, my boyfriend follows an East Asian faith that is kind of like Hinduism and Buddhism. Friday nights we go to this Temple for a service and a meal but before time they offer the foods to their god who then, I guess, blesses that food before the temple members then eat it at their potluck supper. So I am just wondering for me as a Christian: is it OK if I eat that stuff?"

Sometimes we err when we think old temptations and sins are simply gone now. What goes around comes around. And we in the Church yet today do well to take our lessons from history and see just how and when they may yet quite literally apply to today."

➤ https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/lent-3c/?type=lectionary_epistle Scott Hoezee

"...In the larger scheme of things, God's grace is greater than God's judgment. How could it be otherwise?..." http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1578

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