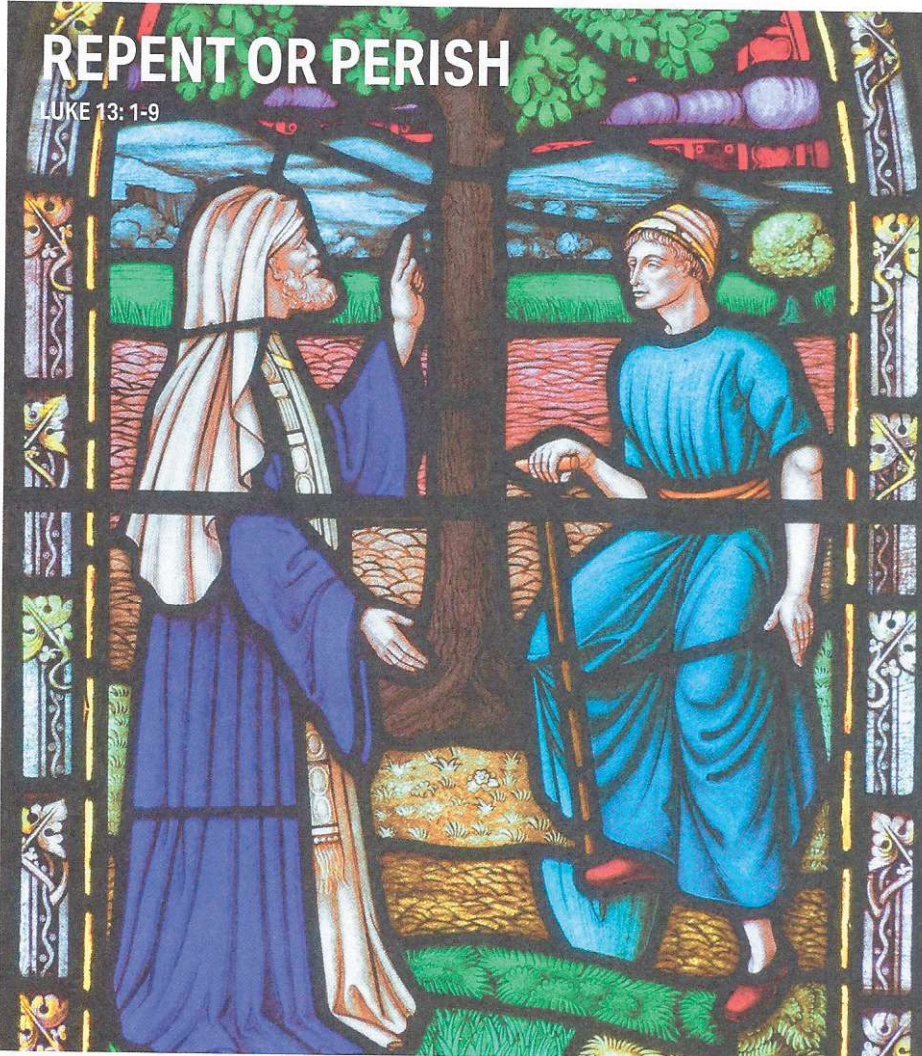


Sunday Message

3RD SUNDAY OF LENT

THE WORD

Year C • 23rd March 2025 • Psalter Week 3



REPENT OR PERISH

LUKE 13: 1-9

The parable of the Fig tree on the stained glass in St Mary Abbot's church on Kensington High Street

Two examples are given by Jesus today when talking about sin and suffering in our world.

Firstly, he speaks of the time Pilate constructed a much needed aqueduct for Jerusalem, with many people outraged at his use of sacred money to build it. So Pilate instructed his soldiers to mingle amongst the crowd with clubs hidden beneath their cloaks. Their job was to beat the Galileans into submission. A task they took on with such enthusiasm, that many were killed. The ones who were killed, says Jesus, weren't necessarily more wicked than those who lived.

In the second example, Jesus tells the parable of the fig tree. The Book of Revelation compares the falling of the stars from the sky at the end of the world, with the falling of the figs from this tree. The fig tree in this story is a reminder of the two kinds of human being: those who give and those who take. Those who only take have to justify their existence. To accept Christ's message is to be open to conversion. ■

LEARN

'Lent is a season of conversion and a time of freedom.' (Pope Francis)

DO

Take the opportunity this Lent to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

REFLECT

March 19th is the day we celebrated one of the great Saints in our Church, St. Joseph. He was the consistent presence in the background of the Gospels, where Jesus found his home, his stability, his growth and learning and wisdom. Joseph the silent worker, preaching by his actions, preaching by his simple presence.

Francis of Assisi once invited a young friar to go with him into town to preach. Francis and the young friar spent all day walking through the streets and then came home. When the day's journey was done, the young friar was disappointed and asked "Weren't we supposed to preach today?" Francis replied, "Son, we have preached. We were preaching while we were walking. We were seen by many and our behaviour was noted. It is of no use walking anywhere to preach unless we preach wherever as we walk!" He summed up his idea in these words, "Preach the Gospel everywhere, and if necessary, use words." To him witnessing to Jesus wasn't merely quoting some words out of the Bible from time to time but one who lives by the word of God each day.

The gardener in the Gospel asked the owner of the vineyard to give the barren fig tree another chance to produce fruit. He promised to dig around it and manure it, to give it one last chance to prove itself. It suggests that we too need to nurture our faith and commit ourselves to being helpful to the lives of others.

Perhaps like St. Joseph, we're that simple presence – offering hope and comfort and love to those around us. ■

SAY

Lord, if we possessed a part of the patience that you give to us, then this world would be transformed.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

*My eyes are always on the Lord,
for he rescues my feet from the snare.
Turn to me and have mercy on me,
for I am alone and poor.*

Or

*When I prove my holiness among you,
I will gather you from all the foreign lands;
and I will pour clean water upon you
and cleanse you from all your impurities,
and I will give you a new spirit, says the Lord.*

COLLECT

O God, author of every mercy and of all goodness, who in fasting, prayer and almsgiving have shown us a remedy for sin, look graciously on this confession of our lowliness, that we, who are bowed down by our conscience, may always be lifted up by your mercy. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

FIRST READING Exodus 3:1-8a. 13-15

A reading from the Book of Exodus.

In those days: Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, 'I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.' When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then he said, 'Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' And he said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Then the LORD said, 'I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey.'

Then Moses said to God, 'If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you", and they ask me, "What is his name?" what shall I say to them?' God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel: "I AM has sent me to you."' God also said to Moses, 'Say this to the people of Israel: "The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you." This is my name for ever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.'

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 103(102):1-2. 3-4. 6-7. 8. 11. R. 8a

R: The LORD is compassionate and gracious.

1. Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and all within me, his holy name.
Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and never forget all his benefits. **R.**
2. It is the LORD who forgives all your sins,
who heals every one of your ills,
who redeems your life from the grave,
who crowns you with mercy and compassion. **R.**
3. The LORD does deeds of justice,
gives full justice to all who are oppressed.
He made known his ways to Moses,
and his deeds to the children of Israel. **R.**

4. The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger and rich in mercy.
For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so strong his mercy for those who fear him. **R.**

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 10:1-6. 10-12

A reading from the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians.

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now 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. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL Matthew 4:17

R: Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God.

Repent, says the Lord,
for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

R: Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God.

GOSPEL Luke 13:1-9

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

There were some present at that very time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, 'Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. 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? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.'

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. And he said to the vine dresser, "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?" And he answered him, "Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig round it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Be pleased, O Lord, with these sacrificial offerings,
and grant that we who beseech pardon for our own sins,
may take care to forgive our neighbour.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

*The sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for her young:
by your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.
Blessed are they who dwell in your house,
for ever singing your praise.*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

As we receive the pledge
of things yet hidden in heaven
and are nourished while still on earth
with the Bread that comes from on high,
we humbly entreat you, O Lord,
that what is being brought about in us in mystery
may come to true completion.

Amen.