**Reflections - 23-29 March – Repentance and second chances**

**Luke 13: 1-9**

**Begin with an opening prayer**

Creator God, as we gather today,
we know we have often failed to choose well.
Be with us, as we hear again
the stories of your limitless love
and measureless grace.
**Amen.**

**Read the passage**

*Consider different ways to read the text. For example, hearing it in more than one version of the Bible.*

Luke 13: 1-9

**Repent or Perish**

**13**Now 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.’”

**Explore and respond to the text**

*Start by reading the Bible notes below. You may want to read them more than once or pause after each paragraph to reflect on what you have read.*

**Bible notes**

This passage comes just ahead of last week’s reading in which Jesus speaks openly about his identity and coming death. Ahead of that exchange, Luke records for us some teaching about the kingdom of God, and the ‘narrow door’ by which it is entered. That set of teachings is introduced by today’s passage. Jesus picks up on some current ‘news stories’ of the time: people who died in a building collapse and the mistreatment of some pilgrims who have come to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices at the Temple. Pilate was known for his ruthless behaviour and inflammatory treatment of the Jewish people, including massacres, the raiding of the Temple treasury and the bringing to Jerusalem of Roman flags bearing the image of Caesar. The question being addressed, however, is whether these people suffering at the hands of Pilate or in the ruined building were being punished for their sin. Jesus is clear that those who died were not being singled out for judgement. Rather, judgement is coming to all, and the only way to survive this is to ‘repent’.

‘Repentance’ denotes a change of direction. It is an encouragement to stop living as has previously suited and to live in a different way, which brings about different results. The point is to stop being out-of-step with God and, instead, to live in God’s way as the people of God. The fig tree parable raises a number of questions (for example, the identities of the vineyard’s owner and the gardener, why a fig tree would be planted in a vineyard and why the tree has not previously been dug around and manured). However, it makes the point that another chance to repent, to change direction, is being given – and that these chances will, at some point, run out.

 **Reflection**

*Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.*

The poem ‘Children Learn What They Live’ by Dorothy Law Nolte sets out the consequences that come from children learning behaviour from the significant people around them: ‘If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn… If children live with acceptance, they learn to love.’ What have we learnt, and what do we model and teach about how to live as the people of God? What do we show people about changing direction and second chances?

**Questions for reflection**

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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| A person holding a plant  AI-generated content may be incorrect. |  |

* How can repotting help a dying plant?
* How does it feel to receive a second chance? How does it feel to give one?
* In what ways can we help to fertilize faith in those who might be struggling?

 **A prayer to end the Bible study**

Loving God,
thank you for your promise to do something new in each of our lives.
Help us to give people a second chance, as you do for us,
today, in the week ahead and always.
**Amen.**