

Lent #3

3-20-2022

J.V. Trautwein, Pastor

Celebrate (Introduction)

“The warnings are plentiful and blunt on the third Sunday in Lent. Cut it out or get cut down! The warnings are accompanied by God’s invitation to attentiveness: ‘incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live.’ The landowner’s ultimatum is forestalled by the gardener’s readiness to till the ground one more year. That is good news for all of us. Thanks be to God!”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Hymn: [“Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now”](#)

Psalmody: Psalm 63:1-8

“O God, thou art my God, I seek thee,
my soul thirsts for thee;
my flesh faints for thee,
as in a dry and weary land where no water is.
² So I have looked upon thee in the sanctuary,
beholding thy power and glory.
³ Because thy steadfast love is better than life,
my lips will praise thee.
⁴ So I will bless thee as long as I live;
I will lift up my hands and call on thy name.
⁵ My soul is feasted as with marrow and fat,
and my mouth praises thee with joyful lips,
⁶ when I think of thee upon my bed,
and meditate on thee in the watches of the night;
⁷ for thou hast been my help,
and in the shadow of thy wings I sing for joy.
⁸ My soul clings to thee;
thy right hand upholds me.”

Hymn of Praise: [“How Great Thou Art”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“Eternal God, your kingdom has broken into our troubled world through the life, death, and resurrection of your Son, Help us to hear your word and obey it, and bring your saving love to fruition in our lives, through, Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.. Amen.”

1st Reading: [Isaiah 55:1-9](#)

2nd Reading: [1 Corinthians 10:1-13](#)

The Gospel: [Luke 13:1-9](#)

Hymn: ["Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed"](#)

The Message: [\(Video\)](#)

Although we may be consumed by the circumstances of today's world with the remnants of the pandemic, a war which is costing so many innocent lives which has the potential of spreading, and the continuing divisiveness of the extremes within our own country, spring with its bringing forth the hope of new life is now just a few days off. In anticipation of this new season many have begun preparing by early planting of seeds and getting outdoors to be within the grasp of nature.

In doing this we may begin to see that winter may have had its damaging effects upon the plant world whose beauty and even fruits give us so much enjoyment. In some cases the trees bushes and plants which we may have in our yards have become a part of our lives and therefore we will do everything to nourish them in order to keep them alive and well. We even may become attached to those trees, bushes and plants which are still relatively young. These may take even more special attention in their relatively young life in order to grow and produce their fruits and give their intended beauty. If they show no or little promise in their growth their fate rest in the decisions we make.

This is the story line of Jesus' parable of the fig tree. Upon inspecting his vineyard with his gardener, the owner came upon a fig tree which he had planted some years ago but for three years beyond which it should have produce fruit there has been nothing. The owner who saw valuable land being taken up by this unproductive tree was not pleased, and said to the gardener "See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none, Cut it down! Why should I be wasting the soil?" Being a gardener he perhaps not only become attached to the tree but sensed a failure on his part of not caring for it enough. To cut it down was not being fair to its life so he pleaded with the landowner, "Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down."

Most interpret this parable in terms of sin, repentance, forgiveness God's judgment and His ultimate grace. That is to say that Jesus is the Gardener and the vineyard owner is His Father. It gives the message that Jesus came to extend God's love to us and give us another chance for our errant ways.. As a matter of fact, God's forgiveness can be seen as endless. This is to be exemplified in our lives also. Remember when Peter came to Jesus and asked him; "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus replied: "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times." This is an infinite number the same as the extent of God's forgiveness. This defines God's love and forgiveness. It is quite clear in this parable, that it is the individual who condemns himself or herself; God in his love accepts that decision even though that mercy is still reaching out. His forgiveness

continues for those who choose to accept it. We are given every chance for God's grace is overwhelming.

To examine this further there is the message of bearing fruit and the judgment of others. Although we like to normalize everything, life cannot be judged in that way. For instance individual growth rates may be dramatically different among people. Some may have a dramatic growth period in their early teens while other may not experience such growth until their middle teens. This difference may be caused by environmental differences but, on the other hand just may be genetic. Such delayed growth may delay those physical attributes or fruits which the body can produce. To experience such a late growth spurt may cause anxiety and even being the brunt of bullying but most often patience is required.

Physical growth is one thing but mental and social growth is another. This is all too often the result of economic and the social conditions of the environmental and social circumstances. We see the results of this within the disparity among people throughout the world and in our own society. Like the fig tree which may have been stunted by a lack of proper care and attention, individuals and groups of individual may suffer from being on the tail-end of how they may be treated by the society in which they live. This has been the case within our society. When putting aside all our preconceived notions and looking with open minds, the truth, which we so often like to deny or rationalize, the priority of our thinking and actions are definitely directed to those who are already being nourished. This is the story of the haves and the have-nots. The haves continually eat at the master's table while the have-nots get fed the scraps. Tragically the have-nots then are blame for their plights and are further cast aside for not doing more for themselves when they are lacking the foundation to do so. You might as well hear the words "Cut them down."

The truth is that they may just need some equal or added attention. They may need to be cultivated and fed with the nourishment of the mind and the body. They just may need the equal chance to produce in their lives as we have been given. It follows then if we interpret this parable in terms of the central truth in the gospel of love as evidenced in the great commandment, the parable then speaks to our need to make the difference through love. "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" In light of this, it is up to us to be that saving gardener in their lives. Therefore this parable can relate to us to go the extra mile in order to help those who need that nourishing hand to those who have not had the equality of opportunity.

Of course it is quite evident as we watch the news that with the devastating war raging, innocent people are being cut off from their roots of living. They are hearing the voice of a ruthless dictator, "Cut them down." As Christians our response must be to be that gardener who goes the extra mile in doing everything possible to save those who are suffering from their ground of their living, the soil of their existence, being taken away. This of course may mean that we, like the gardener, may have to sacrifice in order to go that extra mile in order to save a

people and their children. This means that we will extend the giving through the Angel Tree through Easter Sunday.

This also means that we have been made caretakers of the world in which we live. We are responsible for how the waters and air have been polluted and the needless carnage of the plant and animal life in our care. To say the least we have been poor gardeners and need to drastically change our gardening procedures. We need to go that extra mile in order to become like Jesus as He loves and cares for us and be there to love and care for the well-being of the planet of our domain. The future sustainability for life, as we know it, depends on how we now maintain the environment which we have the responsibility to pass on to future generations.

As for ourselves the parable also tells us that we have a responsibility to make the best usage of the life which we have been given. This means that we are to take advantage of every opportunity to not only grow as human beings but also to give back to the society in which we live. In other words we have the responsibility to bear fruit and not just present excuses why we can't. Not to develop our lives and talents when afforded the opportunity and the environment to do so is to take life for granted and to reject the love which God has shown us through Jesus.

It is during these remaining weeks of Lent that we must evaluate ourselves and how we react to the world and its needs. This brings us full circle back to how we perceive our relationship to God and to His revelation through Jesus. It is how we respond to repentance, and how we receive forgiveness. Even though, on one hand, God's mercy is unending, the parable ends with what seems to be a contradiction: "If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down." This seems to state there is a limit to God's forgiveness and mercy. But, not really. If after everything possible is done to help the tree be fruitful, or to help the individual to become a citizen of God's kingdom, and if there is total rejection, then the decision is out of God's hands. The tree or the individual has chosen not to receive the love and mercy of God and thereby life's fate is the recipient's responsibility.

Anthem: ["Lenten Song"](#)

Offering*: ([On-Line giving Link](#))

We give thee but thine own, what e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy. (St Francis of Assis)

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Eugene Ash, Pam Ash, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Cronin family, Leo Dickel, Dotty Gibson, Nancy Griebel, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, David Kieffer, Pam Lambert, Charles Larsen, Donna Mayhew, the McNamara family, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, Brenda Penyak, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Esther and Buck Trautwein,, Pastor Jack,
We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you;
The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters
Live on knowing God's love,
The joy of living this life of love,
And the peace which only comes through the power of His presence within you.
So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: ["Savior, Again to Your Dear Name"](#)

Announcements

Easter lilies for the altar are \$10.00. See Debbie Fultz

*Offering to be sent to
Robert Brackbill
10274 Raleigh Tavern Lane
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church
9122 Sybert Drive
Columbia Hills
Ellicott City, MD 21043
<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291

