

Church of the Divine Love

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

MARCH 23, 2025 10:15 AM

HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

Please observe silence Alleluias are omitted during Lent

A Morning Prayer – on insert

A PENITENTIAL ORDER

Processional Hymn #

Opening Acclamation for Lent page 351

The Decalogue page 350

The Confession page 352

THE WORD OF GOD

Kyrie page 356

Collect of the Day - lectionary sheet insert

First Lesson: **Exodus 3:1-15**

Psalm 63:1-8

Second Lesson: **1 Corinthians 10:1-13**

Gradual Hymn #

Gospel: **Luke 13:1-9**

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze (on insert)

The Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People, Form IV page 388

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn #

Doxology (sung)

The Great Thanksgiving:

Eucharistic Prayer A page 361

Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal) page 362

Hymn during Consecration – printed on insert

The Lord's Prayer page 364

The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer page 337

The Communion of the People

Communion Hymn #

Post Communion Prayer page 365

Prayer for Peace (on insert)

Prayer for the Parish page 817

Prayer of St. Francis page 833

Dismissal Hymn #

Dismissal

Sermon Sunday March 23, 2025

Exodus 3:1-15; Psalm 63:1-8; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13; Luke 13:1-9.

Sisters and brothers in Christ,

As I reflected on today's gospel (**Luke 13:1-9**) and prepared this sermon I thought about the Russian war on Ukraine, the six million covid deaths worldwide, the devastated earthquake **2010** in Haiti that killed **300** thousand people, scattered tornadoes in Missouri killed over a dozen people and other tragedies in my life.

Not much has changed since the time of Jesus. Tyrants are still acting, towers are still falling, and tragedies are still happening. For me, those kinds of events continue to raise questions about God, fairness, and mortality. They challenge my beliefs, hopes, and illusions that there is some all-knowing, all powerful, Big Other, Magical Other, out there who, if I just believe, pray, and behave rightly, will make sure none of that happens to me or those I care about. They contradict my notions of fairness and that you get what you deserve, the good will be rewarded and the bad will be punished. They remind me of my mortality and that life is fragile, short, and uncertain. I don't want to hear: God is in control, everything happens for a reason, just have faith, or any other trite, shallow, and tired platitude that so often gets spoken in these situations.

I want to know why these things happen, don't you? I want some explanation and way to make sense of it all. I want my fantasy that if I can just understand it then I can control it. Maybe you do too. But today Jesus isn't helping with any of that. He doesn't give a solution to our struggle. He doesn't offer an explanation or a way of understanding why Pilate mingled the blood of Galileans with their sacrifices, or why the Tower of Siloam fell. What if those things are not the point of today's gospel but the intensifiers of today's gospel? And what if they are in our lives as well? I don't mean that we should diminish the losses in our life and time, or in the life and time of Jesus, but that we should feel them more acutely and let them call us into a better way of being. Tyrants, fallen towers, and tragedy intensify the preciousness of life and bring greater awareness to what we are doing with our lives. They intensify the value of relationships and invite us to consider how we are treating creation and one another. They intensify the meaning of this moment and remind us that nothing should be wasted or taken for granted. They intensify the urgency and need to redeem the past and open our eyes and hearts to a new and better way, to the possibility of the impossible.

They intensify the need to look at ourselves and our world with new eyes, to see each other in new ways, and to gain clarity about what really matters and how we want to live. To use my metaphor from Ash Wednesday, they pull back the husks on our lives. And I wonder if that intensification is the reason Jesus does not deal with the why question. He is moving the focus away from why these kinds of things happen, and placing it on how we live in a world where these kinds of things do happen. How is usually a better question than why. How opens the way, why narrows the way. How tends toward the future, why tends toward the past. How is imaginative, why is definitive. How do we find our place amid uncertainty and turmoil? How do we not lose ourselves to the pain and tragedies of our lives and world? How do we keep ourselves in the midst of conflict and violence? How do we sharpen our vision to see more clearly? How do we keep our hearts soft and keep hope? How do we live amidst death?

"Repent." That's Jesus' answer to the how question, and he says it twice in today's gospel. "Unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did." "What does that bring up for you? I think our understanding of repentance is often too small. We make it only about behavior and changing from bad to good. There's

nothing wrong with that and I'm in favor of good behavior but Jesus is very clear that he is talking about more than bad behavior. Listen to what he says: "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way, they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you." "Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you." "But unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did. "He's not offering a cause-and-effect explanation, he's offering a choice between life and death. And that choice is always before us. Every moment is a burning bush moment of divine presence, hope, new life and more life. The only question is whether we will turn aside to see this great thing.

Will we turn aside to find the courage, hope, and perseverance needed in the moment? Will I turn aside to address the needs and interests of another? Will you turn aside and break your usual patterns of thinking and acting? Will you turn aside to see the opportunity for love, compassion, forgiveness? Will we turn aside and bring good news to the poor, bind up the brokenhearted, release the captive, and let the oppressed go free? Will I turn aside to do justice, bring peace, welcome the stranger, and love the enemy? Will you and I turn aside from the fear, busyness, and distractions that keep us from living the life that wants to enter the world through us? What's the turning aside that needs to happen in your life today? And what if that turning aside is repentance? What if repentance is continually turning back to life in a world where tyrants act, towers fall, and tragedies happen? What if repentance is changing our mind, getting our life turned around, and going in a better direction? What if repentance is reimagining ourselves to be more and our lives to be larger than what has happened to us or what we have done and left undone?

Take a moment and reimagine yourself as more than your history. This isn't about undoing or redoing the past. It's about how you want to live this moment, the next, and the one after that. Reimagine your life. Reimagine your relationships. Reimagine how you might live beside and respond to the tyrants, fallen towers, and tragedies in your life and world. What do you see? What does all that look like? What is it asking of you? What do you need to do, change, reclaim, or let go of in order to start living your reimagined life today? This is our work to do. No one else can do it for us, and neither will God or Jesus. If things are going to get turned around then it's up to you and me, just as it was for Moses in today's reading from the Old Testament (**Exodus 3:1-15**). God tells Moses "I have observed the misery of my people," "I have heard their cry," "I know their sufferings," "And I have come down to deliver them. "I'm sure Moses was thrilled to hear those words. Who among us today doesn't want to hear those words from God? They are words of care, compassion, and justice; words of hope and change; words of presence and promise that things are finally going to turn around.

No, I tell you," He says, "but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did. "These words sound like the distorted cause and effect that Jesus has just denied. They sound like a threat from a demanding landowner, "Produce fruit or be cut down." But that is not who God is and that is not how God deals

with God's people. God does not cut down life. God gives, sustains, and grows life. Rather, these words of Jesus are the words of a compassionate and caring gardener who seeks to nourish life, who is willing to get down on his hands and knees, to dig around in the dirt of our life, to water, even spread a little manure, and then trust that fruit will grow. This gardener sees possibilities for life that we often cannot see in our own or each other's lives. If the absence of fruit does not cause God's retribution, then neither does the presence of fruit cause God to reward. Even being sinless will not save us from suffering and tragedy. Jesus' own life and death prove that. Fruit, for this gardener, is not a payment, a transaction, or a ransom for being permitted to live another day. It is instead the result of mutual love, relationship, and presence. It is the evidence of life.

We are right to hear urgency and necessity in Jesus' call to repentance. This is not because God is vindictive but because life is short, precious, and sacred. It is not because God is retribution but because God is love. Jesus does not seem as concerned about why people die as why people do not live. Everyone dies but not all truly live. Too often and too easily we perish even before we die – through our fear, prejudices, judgments and condemnations, the need for control, the victimization of others, and our impoverishment of God.

Jesus' call to repentance is the invitation to choose life. Live or perish. We choose which way we will turn. The reality is towers fall, hurricanes strike, disease kills, accident happens, and the Pontius Pilates of this world seek to destroy life. So, we must decide where we place our trust – in the mechanics of a distorted cause and effect or in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the God who has observed our misery, heard our cry, and come to deliver us. Our time is running out. May we live our lives in a state of repentance. **Amen.**

Enclosed are Easter flower memorial envelopes.

Please return by Sunday, April 13th.

All baptized Christians, regardless of age, are welcome to receive communion in the Episcopal Church.

3 LENT

10:15 AM

HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS

11:15 AM

VESTRY MEETING

MONDAY	8:00 PM	AA MEETING
TUESDAY	7:00 PM	BIBLE STUDY
WEDNESDAY	7:00 PM	AL-ANON MEETING
THURSDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP
SATURDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP
4 LENT	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II
		BISHOP'S VISITATION
		LUNCH FOLLOWS

	Today	Next Week
Eucharistic Minister	Anthony Giordano	Jess Berbeck
Coffee Hour	Giordanos	Lunch

PARISH PRAYER LIST

Loving God, comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit. Give them courage and hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of your salvation. Especially we remember before you:

Barbara Curran	Betty Curley	Jess
Bob Curley	Steve Curley	Art
Chris Dickson	John Rocco	Deb P.
John Mulligan	Marjorie Guerrier	Lynette

Manetta Family	Robert Hosey	Ryan
Sister Eddie	Bernie Walther	Celeste
Beverly Noel	Phil Ryder	Warren
Anthony Paribello	Dorothy	Del
Donna Amundsen	Kate Jones	Aidan
Sally & Roger	Vincent & Barbara	Ciara
Mary & Family	Wendy	Jan
Nathan Treadwell	Gladys Hadija	Sophia
Michael & Family	Kristen	Mo
Michelle & Baby	Joseph	Annie
Jerry & Family	Shannon & Family	Donna A.
Christopher	Oitice Family	

All people and countries suffering from violence, hatred and natural disaster.

The homeless and food insecure.

Help us speak words of encouragement and offer deeds of kindness to them.

Bring us with them, into the unending joy of your kingdom. Amen

The departed: Matthew Treasure

To add or make changes to prayer list during the week, email

Janet Croft at jmc220@optonline.net.

A Morning Prayer

Father in heaven, I stand ready to receive Your wisdom and guidance. In each decision, big or small, lead me to discern your will and to act accordingly. Help me to understand the depth of Your wisdom, finding guidance in Your word and through prayer. Teach me to be patient as I wait for Your direction, trusting that Your timing is perfect. May I navigate this day with the assurance that Your wisdom is a treasure far greater than any earthly knowledge. Guide my thoughts and actions, that they may be a reflection of Your discernment and love. In Your guidance, I find the path to a life of purpose and peace.

Amen

Hymn to be sung during the consecration:

Father I adore you,
Lay my life before you,
How I love you.

Repeat twice with second verse starting with Jesus
And third verse starting with Spirit.

Prayer for Peace

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn
but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So
mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that
all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince
of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominions
and glory, now and forever. Amen

