

Sunday March 7, 2010
3rd Sunday of Lent

1 st Reading	Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15
Responsorial	Psalms 103:1-2, 3-4, 6-7, 8, 11
2 nd Reading	1Cor 10:1-6, 10-12
Gospel	Luke 13:1-9

Some people told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with the blood of their sacrifices.

Jesus said to them in reply, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were greater sinners than all other Galileans? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did! Or those eighteen people who were killed when the tower at Siloam fell on them— do you think they were more guilty than everyone else who lived in Jerusalem? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!" And he told them this parable:

"There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none, he said to the gardener, 'For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none.

So cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?' He said to him in reply, 'Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down.'"

Application

Jesus was asked by some listeners to address the issue of sin and its consequences in the light of two current disasters that befell the residents of Jerusalem. The first incident occurred in the temple at Jerusalem. Pilate, who was the Roman governor of Jerusalem at the time, ordered his troops to slaughter a group of Galileans who had come up to Jerusalem to offer sacrifice in the temple. We do not know what these Galileans did to incite Pilate's wrath, nor why Pilate chose to attack them in the holiest of places for the Jews, in their temple at Jerusalem. For the Jews, this was political barbarity and sacrilege at its worst! The second incident which Jesus addressed was a natural disaster, a tower in Jerusalem which unexpectedly collapsed, killing 18 people. The Jews often associated such calamities and disasters as a consequence of sin. Scripture does warn that sin can result in calamity! *Though the righteous fall seven times, and rise again; the wicked are overthrown by calamity* (Proverbs 24:16).

The real danger and calamity which Jesus points out is that an unexpected disaster or a sudden death does not give us time to repent of our sins and to prepare ourselves to meet the Judge of heaven and earth. The Book of Job reminds us that misfortune and calamity can befall both the righteous and the unrighteous alike. Jesus gives a clear warning - take responsibility for your actions and moral choices and put sin to death today before it can destroy your heart, mind, soul, and body as well. Unrepentant sin is like a cancer which corrupts us from within. If it is not eliminated through repentance - asking God for forgiveness and for his healing grace, it leads to a spiritual death which is far worse than physical destruction.

Jesus' parable of the barren fig trees illustrated his warning about the consequences of allowing sin and corruption to take root in our hearts and minds. Fig trees were a common and important source of food for the people of Palestine. A fig tree normally matured within three years, producing plentiful fruit. If it failed, it was cut down to make room for more healthy trees. A decaying fig tree and its bad fruit came to symbolize for the Jews the consequence of spiritual corruption caused by evil deeds and unrepentant sin.

Questions for Personal Reflection:

1. Should we delay in seeking reconciliation with the Father?

Questions for Community Faith Sharing:

What do you think led to the decay in the righteous living of the Jews?

What do you think will lead us to stray away from living righteously?

Prayer.

"Lord Jesus, increase my hunger for you that I may grow in righteousness and holiness. May I not squander the grace of the present moment to say "yes" to you and to your will and plan for my life."