

Sermon 20 March 2022 Lent 3, 8am, Isaiah 55: 1-9, Luke 13: 1-9
Lord God help us turn to you and be transformed by your love for us. Amen

How many times a day does something niggle at us so that we say something sarcastic, critical, unkind, or think only of ourselves - what's in it for me? I deserve a break, why should I help out, surely there are others to do that? Why do I have covid and other people don't? I don't think it'll make any difference to the world if I eat less meat or stop buying veg wrapped in plastic, so why should I do it?

But God doesn't moan....

We really don't think or act in the same way as God, do we?

8 *For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.*

- God gives us many blessings around here- so many we often don't actually notice them around us -flowers, insects, bees, butterflies, sunshine, green spaces to walk and play in
- perhaps we take other things for granted (if we have them) or just think it is our right- a house to live in, food to eat (maybe not our favourite....but at least food), or here in Baldock safety from the worst effects of Climate Change.
- Jesus didn't moan either, Jesus followed his Father God who sees, well actually *created* the whole bigger picture of our earth and the universe that we are just one tiny miniscule part of. So very tiny yet God cares so very much about each of us as individuals- he *would love us* to notice him, return to him, to his way of thinking, the trust and belief that he will always forgive us when we do turn to him.
- He is a God of 2nd chances. He is love. He is the life source within us that says - ok that was a mistake, but you are sorry, pick yourself up, dust yourself off and start all over again, and again, and again.

Let them return to the Lord

Seek the Lord while he is near

- The fig tree gets a second chance - we are like that fig tree - perhaps we say "*please I do really want to try harder, I want to follow your ways Lord but I fall flat on my face again and again.*" The gardener (presumably God) will nurture, will feed, will cajole and encourage the tree to blossom, to flourish, to produce fruit, just as he will with us.
- It's not a quick fix with instant chemicals, an energy drink, a can of powerful chemicals, it takes time and care and commitment - turning to or turning back to God, deciding to follow where Jesus leads and change our lives happens little by little- in God's time, not in a sound bite,
- it takes us time to heal from tough situations, illness, times when we feel broken, unsettled, alone, even despairing.

But don't despair - with Jesus there is always hope, a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel drawing us forward, calling us forward towards God, to ways and thoughts that are higher than our ways and thoughts and much longer lasting and so much more fulfilling and empowering and life-giving, if only we can reach up to them and keep on embracing them little by little, letting them change us from the inside.

- Pray! Talk to other Christians. Come to worship God through Jesus in church together.
- Join a Home Group or come to a Lent discussion group.

Seek the Lord while he is near - the Lord is always near , Jesus is always with us , we just have to turn towards him, towards the light and the nourishment that will let us grow, that will give us inner strength when the tough times come - the fig tree may face attack from pests, from climate change induced drought, but I'm sure it would have responded to its reprieve, it's devotion and kind handling from God the gardener , and flourished, because God has time for the fig tree ,just like , incredibly he has time for each of us individually- his ways are higher than our ways, his thoughts are beyond our grasp, we cannot be God but we can grow more like him and that is what he would love us to do. God the Father sent us Jesus so that we can see more clearly how to live God's ways, think God's thoughts . He will give us 2nd chances – he forgives our sins and let's us try again.

- But to grasp 2nd chances it means we have to change - we have to follow different rules, give up some of our deeply held ways of acting and reacting , face truths and not just think "it'll all be ok" , life will return to normal soon. After COVID , after the energy crisis , after people have stopped talking about climate change, after the war in Ukraine. It won't return to normal , it will be different, so let's make it different in a better way by asking for God's help in our lives.
- Life is a process, we are all a work in progress, the fig tree is a work in progress, part of God's marvellous creation and God is in ongoing relationship with creation, all of it , not just us humans.
- Our lives, our faith, our traditions develop, are affected by our surroundings, who we meet, experiences we go through, joyful and sad, inspiring and devastating. Change within the framework of God is healthy- *seek the Lord while he is near* - the Lord never changes. God is always love. Jesus is always there for us, showing us by example how to live to God's truth,
- Let that inspire us .let's take time during Lent to call upon the Lord while he is near, to let him nurture and save us, let him gently change us towards his ways which are not our ways and his thoughts which are not our thoughts , and delight in the new growth he produces in us because he takes the time to show each of us his all encompassing and everlasting love.

In the name of the Father , Son and Holy Spirit, Amen

All Age Sermon 20.3.22, 09:30 Parish Praise

- Talk about the What-If Craftivist banner – beautiful reminder that we need to act to save our seas and creatures
- Gods ways are higher than our ways
- Seek the Lord while he is near – God is always near, Jesus is always with us
- God of 2nd chances – will always forgive us if we turn to him

Re-enact fig tree parable- use my dead tree prop!

Kids watering cans, peat free compost bag- tell people it's vital to use peat free- carbon sink and peat bogs take hundreds of thousands of years to form

– kids in tub trugs ,growing taller as others put paper cut out fruits (red apples, yellow bananas, orange oranges, purple figs,)on them – with words on them: things to do that bring us closer to Jesus and therefore grow- read them out...

eg

Kind, helpful, sharing, humble, generous, give time, listen

Tidy your room

Don't have arguments

Help your mummy/ daddy

Say sorry

Share sweets, toys

Come to church to worship

Say a prayer

Ask someone to join in your game

Don't fight

Tell the truth

Thank God when something goes well

Don't throw rubbish in the sea

Look after nature

Plant flowers

Ending:Let that inspire us .let's take time during Lent to call upon the Lord while he is near, to let him nurture and save us, let him gently change us towards his ways which are not our ways and his thoughts which are not our thoughts , and delight in the new growth he produces in us because he takes the time to show each of us his all encompassing and everlasting love.

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Katrina Nice 20.3.22