Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide March 23, 2025
Another Year of Grace

Lent

Luke 13:1-9

KEY VERSES

At that very time there were some present who told Jesus[a] about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. **2** *He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?* **3** *No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish as they did.* **4** *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 other people living in Jerusalem?* **5** *No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish just as they did."* **6** *Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it and found none.* **7** *So he said to the man working the vineyard, '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 it be wasting the soil?'* **8** *He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it.* **9** *If it bears fruit next year, well and good, but if not, you can cut it down.' "*

As we prepare for Lent, we continue through the lectionary as we make our hearts ready to celebrate Jesus' resurrection. In this passage from Luke, the people come to Jesus to get his take on two recent tragic events. The heart of their concern is, does God measure sins, as if some are worse than others? Like us, they are yearning for truth and meaning behind circumstances. Faith is believing in something we can't see, and this lack of "seeing" forces us to lean on the One who has all understanding. Jesus replies that repentance is the key. Repentance - of the control we try to exercise over the things of this world, and the judgment we impose upon others. **How is Jesus calling you to repent of some of your ways or attitudes?**

To explain repentance to his audience, Jesus uses the example of a fig tree. Like the landowner, we might be prone to cut down a non-producing tree, in the same way we remove what insults us. The gardener begs the landowner for one more year to nourish the tree, devoted to its flourishing. **Where does your impatience run the thinnest? How is Jesus the gardener devoted to your flourishing?**

Patience – often referred to as "forbearance" in scripture - takes the long view of others, understanding that we are all "underway." In the listing of the nine fruits of the spirit in Galatians, love leads the list, each successive one being an expression of love. Patience is love in another form, and a way for us to express love. **In what situations do you find waiting to be the most challenging?**

As evidenced in scripture, patience is built into the creative waiting plan of God. Even God's plan to come and live among us did not begin in the form of an adult, but as a baby who had to grow up. Cultivating a spirit of patience takes effort to counter our fast-paced impulses. We run the risk of losing the taste and appreciation for things that take time. **What are you doing now to intentionally make yourself wait? Pray this week for God to cultivate and fertilize you toward new fruitfulness. And**

as you wait for the fruit, may you pour that same mercy and grace out on others, in celebration for what God has done.