

Let it Alone

Lent

Luke 13:1-9

EXPLORING THE SERMON

- * What did you hear?
- * What did you think or feel about what you heard?
- * What is one thing you can take away from the sermon this week?

KEY VERSES

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. 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.”

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. So he 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 it be wasting the soil?’ He replied, ‘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.’”

REFLECTION

In the first part of this text, Jesus is asked if suffering is tied to fate. His response likely brought them no comfort: “No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish...” Our modern culture seems to allow everything and forgive nothing. **Why does it make us uncomfortable to recognize sin as the “great equalizer,” under whose curse we all live?**

Francis Spufford describes sin as “the human propensity to mess things up.” Sin also gives us a moral vocabulary to distinguish between right and wrong, and helps us make sense of all the ways we hurt each other. **What does sin bring up for you (shame, guilt)? How can recognizing and naming sin open us up to grace instead?**

Through the parable in the second part of this text, Jesus promises that no matter how little we produce nor how wavering our spiritual life, God will always offer mercy. The response of God, the gardener (“let it alone”) is similar to Jesus' words from the cross (“forgive them, for they know not what they are doing”). This parable leaves us not with specific practices or strategies, but simply the promise of forgiveness and a choice to believe it. **Where do you need to “let it alone” and allow God to feed your roots, to give way to something new and alive?**