



The Rev. Liz Williams
Sermon for the Third Sunday in Lent C March 24, 2019

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

From doubt to trust.

Come, Holy Spirit, Come. May the words I speak be the words your people need to hear.

Good morning!

Here we are mid-Lent; a time when we think about forgiveness, about giving up things or doing extra things. It is also a time to be more aware of God's love for us and for asking God to help us on our journey.

Perhaps we are asking to be more loving, or to be more open, or to be more prayerful, or . . . well, you fill in the blank.

Our readings this morning started with the call of Moses by God. We hear that God called to Moses from 'out of the bush'. As God tells Moses what has been seen and heard, Moses has a moment of doubt. "**Who am I** that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" We too have those moments when we say, "Who am I" that I should be chosen by God?" to be the one who God works in and through, who should have things transformed, from death into resurrection? This is our hope as a resurrection people.

Think of those things that are like or have been like 'death' to you. Perhaps an illness, or a job, or a relationship, or a dream. Those things we don't believe we will survive and yet do and those things we hope for but which aren't yet. During this time of Lent, we are also learning to trust God. If we, like the Israelites only look to God when things are **not** going well, when we appeal to God to deliver us from our problems . . . chances are, we do not always praise God when things are going well and we might not seek God with our whole heart.

Sometimes, because of that moment of doubt.

Or like the people who came to Jesus in the reading from First Corinthians. They asked about the Galileans who were slaughtered by Pilate while offering their sacrifices and Jesus responds, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?”

Did those who came to Jesus believe because they hadn’t endured something so horrible, they were in good standing with God?

Where are the places we, too, have the false confidence that comes with things going our way . . . places where God must be blessing **us but not them**. Jesus reminds us that we **ALL** fall short and that God always gives us another chance, just like the Israelites as they get ready to enter the promised land.

In our Friday Lenten Book Study, we have been talking about our understanding of heaven and hell and what we believe about not only what it takes to get there but also about who will be there.

We have talked about what Jesus wants for us;
to pursue the life of heaven **now**,
to have our hearts transformed,
to constantly learn and grow,
and to grow in our giving, forgiving, and truth telling.

Let’s turn to the parable of the fig tree.

To the heart of Lent. . . a call for a change of heart.

A man goes looking for fruit on his fig tree. He doesn’t find any. I’m going to ask you to think of a project or person that you have been waiting to see results from. The young person who has not figured out their course of study for college, the project that has not produced the return you expected. Or maybe you might think of a relationship that has not moved to the place you desired.

We hear in the parable that the owner of the tree wants to “Cut it down!” and “Why should it be wasting soil?” We often measure things by how quickly they produce, how much time and money we have spent on making ‘it’ happen. For any of you who have grown fruit or nut trees; you know it takes time and energy, water, fertilizer, sun. And sometimes the tree does not bear ‘fruit’ at the same time as those planted together. This parable is not a surprise when we remember this truth. Listen again to what the gardener says, “let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it.” Let’s give it another chance, let’s give it more time.

Just as God gives us chance after chance
to get it right,
to be more forgiving,
to pray more frequently,
to be more compassionate.

To grow in our knowledge and love of God and God’s son, Jesus Christ. **And** we don’t all get it right or do it at the same pace. Just like this fig tree.

One of the things I pray for frequently is patience.
To be patient for an answer to a question,
to be patient for treatment to work for an illness,
to be patient for healing from surgery or healing from a broken relationship,
to be patient for someone else to make a decision,
to be patient as I wait to hear from God.

We have experienced that here at St. Paul’s. The Comprehensive Growth Project is now in its third year and for the first time, all of the components of the project are up and running!

We can doubt or we can be anxious **or**
we can trust in God to provide what is needed, when the time is right.

We can set aside the doubt and know that God is with us when things don't happen the way we expect or when we are suffering . . .listening for God to say, "give it a little more time, I'll be with you, you will not be alone. Let's wait and see."

Have faith, as we prepare for Easter in this Lenten season. Allow God to till the soil of our lives, to feed us hope when we do not trust, waiting until the fruit **in us** can be seen. AMEN.