

Sunday, March 7, 2010

Third Sunday of Lent

Exodus 3: 1-8, 13-15; Psalm 103; 1 Corinthians 10: 1-6, 10-12; Luke 13:1-9

We may have a subtle theme this week: holy ground. Moses is in the wilderness when he encounters God in the burning bush and is instructed to take off his shoes on holy ground. God promises him a holy land flowing with milk and honey. Paul writes about Israel's time in the wilderness, both the graces and the sin. Our gospel selection indicates that Jesus is interested in the news of the day, but he refuses to draw moral lessons from tragedies. Instead he tells a parable of a non-productive fig tree. When the owner asks, "Why should it be wasting the soil?" the gardener pleads for one more year. He will dig around it and fertilize it with manure.

Jesus is spending these days in the wilderness. Does he encounter God in a burning bush? Does he consider wilderness holy ground? Ask him. Be with him in this solitude. "Wasting the soil" is so contemporary. Pray for those who work the soil and those who protect it. And ourselves: what are you producing? What are the fruits of the Spirit that you desire? What needs digging up in your holy ground? What is the manure thrown at you? Share all this with Jesus too as you accompany him in the wilderness.

You have chosen us to be with Jesus in the wilderness, to find holy ground even in what looks barren. Thank you. Prune us, God, that we may bear fruit in abundance.

Monday, March 8, 2010

2 Kings 5:-15; Psalm 42; Luke 4: 24-30

As we move along in Lent, our readings show the hostility building against Jesus. Naaman the Syrian, healed in the waters of the Jordan, becomes an object lesson as Jesus challenges the narrowness of his hometown folk. "When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff."

Read the whole gospel passage. Visit Nazareth. Hear Jesus preaching. He exalts a foreigner. The congregation erupts in fury and rushes him. How do you respond, what do you feel, what do you want? You watch as they drag him to the top of the hill. Mary, his mother, terrified, joins you. Is there any way to comfort her? Speak with her about the growing hostility. Let her speak to you.

Mary, mother of sorrows, you stand—by Jesus in his ministry, at the cross, in his Easter visitation, as he ascends -- away from you. Share your courage and love with us, Mary.

Tuesday, March 9, 2010

Daniel 3:25, 34-43; Psalm 25; Matthew 18: 21-35

“Peter came to Jesus and said, “Lord, if a brother or sister sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times? Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, I tell you, but seventy-seven times.” Peter who wears his emotions on his face and in his big mouth, must be easily offended.

Who sins against you? Who has sinned against you? This is a season for reconciliation, not in the confessional box so much as face to face. To say to someone, “I forgive you” is very patronizing, unless the person specifically asks for forgiveness. But reconciliation means to talk again. Just to greet the person, to ask after them, gets the conversation going again. To whom do you need to write, to talk to? Ask Jesus for the grace to forgive as you have been forgiven.

Guide us, Holy Spirit, to channel our outrage at real injustices, not the slights of daily living. Give your wisdom to peace makers and reconcilers around the world.

Wednesday, March 10, 2010

Deuteronomy 4: 1, 5-9; Psalm 147; Matthew 5: 17-19

Jesus teaches: “Whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kin-dom of heaven...” Notice, the law-breaker is still included in the kin-dom. Jesus is so inclusive!

What is your attitude toward those who break the law, God’s law or human law? How do you reconcile keeping law with the freedom of the children of God? Augustine teaches: “Love, and do what you want.” What do you want?

Please give us the discernment to recognize evil and to replace it with justice. Please give us open, humble hearts to welcome the weak and to include everyone in our love,

Thursday, March 11, 2010

Jeremiah 7: 23-28; Psalm 95; Luke 11:14-23

“Some said, ‘He casts out devils by Beelzebul...’ Jesus said, “The one who is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me, scatters.” Jesus has just noted that division destroys: “every kindom divided against itself becomes a desert...” Then he issues a strong warning that we had better gather with him.

At his last meal Jesus expresses his deepest desire: that all may be one. What will you do today to “gather?” Make a meal, teach a class, let someone into a line of traffic? Home alone? Pray for unity among peoples. Bedridden? Smile and thank your caregiver. Share Jesus’ prayer throughout the day: May they all be one.

Forgive Christians who shun Muslims, Muslims who despise Jews, Jews who make war on Palestinians, and on and on! Let our prayer for reconciliation and unity comfort your heart, Jesus.

Friday, March 12, 2010

Hosea 14: 1-9; Psalm 81; Mark 12: 28-34

Through Hosea, God promises, “I will love them freely.” Then God cries out in the psalm: “Oh that you would listen to me! I would feed you with the finest wheat and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you!”

Grace/sin/grace—such is the pattern of human behavior. Rest quietly in the belief that God loves you with all God’s heart. But what is God asking you to listen to? Listen. Then tell God what would satisfy you.

What would satisfy you, our loving God? We do want to love you with our whole being, and our neighbors as ourselves. Give us the gift of your love to share with all whom we meet today.

Saturday, March 13, 2010

Hosea 5: 15-6:6; Psalm 51; Luke 18: 9-14

Repetition is good, and so we pray Psalm 51 often during Lent, Another prayer highly recommended by Jesus is not the recounting of our good deeds to God like the Pharisee in today’s gospel but this, from the one standing at the back of the temple: “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!”

How does that prayer feel on your tongue? You may protest, I do not DO sins. Ah, but if you are not a sinner, what need have you for Jesus who saves you, sets you free? We are loved sinners, and we rejoice in our sinfulness. Do you? Ask for that gift of knowing that totally undeserved love and joy.

God, be merciful to us all who acknowledge our sinfulness and need for healing. Savior of the world, save us! Save our planet, its peoples, our enemies, ourselves.