

Sermon for 23 March 2025

Third Sunday in Lent

Scriptures: Isaiah 55:1-9; Psalter: Page 788 (Verses 1-8 only, of Psalm 63) Response: **God will take care of you** (130:, *last 2 measures*); 1 Corinthians 10:1-13; Luke 13:1-9

Sermon:

Serious advice about hard times is our title this year for the six weeks of Lent.

Every one of today's scriptures has that focus.

The first lesson, from Isaiah, applies to the last few years of the time when the leaders of Israel were living in captivity by the Babylonians. It beautifully appeals to these discouraged people with encouraging words that have been valuable to Jews and Christians all throughout our history.

The first eight verses of Psalm 63 is intensely personal about the same topic of hope. God is hope to us privately, and to groups and nations of us as well.

Coming down to church times, Paul appeals to believers like us ... some new, some already grown old in the faith ... to trust in God's love, the world is the product of it, everything is founded on God's forgiveness and gracious welcome back into right living ... but you have to apply it, young or old, anywhere you are...

Then the Gospel sums it up: You have to try. You can't think you're different from the rest of us. Bad things happen to good people. Rich and poor, weak and strong ... hard times come to everybody, and looking deep inside and far and wide to see what change might improve things is basic for everybody. And of course the parable of the fig tree, with its chance of one more year, is prime truth and classic Jesus.

Where does that get us today? I can't get enough of it. Just these last couple of days, I've been learning how to take things differently, and it helps a lot. All these years I've done things one way, and now I'm finding I don't have to be that way just because I always have been that way. I've walked around the block and realized, "I don't have to do that." It's awesome. I don't even know how I'll behave this afternoon. There's a different way of living if you believe in hope, and think you can change. If you let it sink in that you are never, ever going to stop growing and changing, all the stuff that's terrible doesn't rule any more. In fact, lots of terrible things don't turn out like I expected. I find I might even get some new friends if I keep looking at things hopefully, trying to see the other side, whether the other people look at it that way or not ... Things don't end completely. There's another chance... And there's sure a lot that can make things better when you look for it ...

What's your take on this?

Let us pray.