

Sunday, March 23, 2025 Lent 3 "Those Three Crucial Years"

Isaiah 55:1-9 Psalm 63: 1-8 1 Corinthians 10: 1-13 Luke 13: 1-9

4th Lenten Study, Tuesday, March 25, 7 pm

"What is My View of the Gospel?," led by Hank Engell

The four Scriptures for this morning are centered around the hunger and thirst that we experience. Isaiah offers refugees without money the opportunity to be satisfied with good things money can't buy. God's ways are different from ours and we can't control what God does. The Psalm tells of waiting on the Lord for meeting of needs and remembering what God has done. 1 Corinthians speaks of having the Lord meet the needs of his people, but the people not be satisfied by that, and grumbling. The Luke passage, which we did not read, tells us that none of us deserve to escape judgment, and that God expects us to be fruitful with the life that God has given us.

"Am I a good person?" "How can I be a better person?" "How do I deal with my failings?" These are not the right questions in the presence of God, where we can never justify ourselves or call ourselves righteous. I suggest that today's readings lead us to ask, "What am I thirsty and hungry for? How am I trying to meet these needs? Am I satisfied with what I am doing? What is God offering me? Why don't I think that what God has is what I want?" And, in the parable that Christ teaches, "How can I take the three years of mercy I have received, nurture for one more year, and make something of them?" "How can I do what I really want to do?"

This Tuesday's Lenten gathering led by Hank Engell will be focused on the Gospels. We will be invited to consider what we think the Good News is. The Bible gives us a long, messy history of the relationship between God and humans. God tells us he will meet our needs as we trust in him, and how to wait on him when our needs are not met. God tells us we are his people, and in fact that all people are in his care. We are helpless in the face of the great forces of the natural world and the moving of human history, and yet we are as responsible as a fig tree for bearing fruit, that is, living in obedience to God, filling our own shoes, taking our place in the human community.

The Isaiah passage recognizes that humans need both physical nourishment and spiritual life. We are both animal and spirit. We are not slaves to our yearnings, yet those longings drive us and tell us about what God is doing for us. 1 Corinthians looks back on what God has done in the past and expects us to understand what God is doing now. It's true that the Gardener has been watching us for three years and we don't have anything to show for it, but why not take the extra year granted by the gardener, drink in the care God gives, in order to be fruitful? Isn't that what we really want?