Third Sunday in Lent – Luke chapter 13, verses 1 - 9 :-

As we noted last week these readings come at a time when the Jewish authorities were seeking a confrontation with the Lord Jesus. This is emphasised at the beginning of this section of 'teachings' in Luke chapter 11, verses 53 – 54. The Lord Jesus is aware of this and some of his comments and parables are told in the contexts of these threats. He continues with His teaching and verses 6 – 9 contain another example of His criticism of unworthy worship and its doom.

Verses 1- 3 :- The 'Galileans' were known to be fanatical nationalists. This group had probably been demonstrating and causing a disturbance in Jerusalem. The crackdown on their activities was entirely in keeping with the known character of Pilate. The Lord Jesus is pointing out that 'sin is sin'. Compare with the attitude and repentance of King David as expressed in Psalm 51.

Verses 4 – 5 :- Another example used by the Lord Jesus regarding a recent well known happening in Jerusalem. Just because a sudden catastrophe happened to those eighteen people who 'were in the wrong place at the wrong time' did not mean that they were any greater sinners than the rest of humanity. Repentance and restoration is needed for all.

Verses 6 – 7:- These verses echo the lament by the prophet Isaiah as recorded in Isaiah chapter 5 which is well worth reading. There the example used is a vineyard planted by the Lord God. That the parable of the fig tree was told against the 'establishment' would not be lost on his listeners.
A fig tree should be established after 3 years and at least bearing some fruit. The method described by *'the gardener'* is probably what is known as 'root pruning'. A fruit tree that only produces leaves can often be made to fruit by carefully digging under it and cutting the central tap root. It may be that the shock to the system can mean less show and a crop of fruit.
The Lord Jesus was of course referring, as was the prophet Isaiah, to the formal Jewish worship of the time – 'all show and no grow'! It needed root and branch reform.
This was the time of a last chance for the Temple worship. Repent and change or judgement is certain. This came in the destruction of the city and the Temple after a siege by the Roman army in A.D.70.

Again the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in verses 3 and 5 are appropriate -
"If you do not repent you will all perish . . ."

Again please **Pray for the peace of Jerusalem'.** See last week's study for suggested prayers.

Sinners Jesus will receive;
Sound this word of grace to all
Who the heavenly pathway leave,
All who linger, all who fall.
chorus *Sing it o'er and o'er again;*
Christ receiveth sinful men;
Make the message clear and plain:
Christ receiveth sinful men.

Come, and He will give you rest;
Trust Him for His word is plain;
He will take the sinfulest;
Christ receiveth sinful men. chorus

Now my heart condemns me not,
Pure before the law I stand;
He who cleansed me from all spot,
Satisfied its last demand. chorus

Christ receiveth sinful men,
Even me with all my sin;
Purged from every spot and stain,
Glory I shall enter in. chorus Author: Erdmann Neumeister (1718); Trans: Frances Bevan (1858)

Terry Brighton 20 / 3 / 2025