

Third Sunday in Lent: Choose to repent

Readings: Isaiah 55.1-9, Psalm 63.1-8, 1 Corinthians 10.1-13. Luke 13.1-9.

Gospel: Luke 13.1-9

Focus

When conflict broke out in the Solomon Islands in 1998 and again in 2003, up to one hundred people lost their lives. The local people (Istabus) accused the Malaitans, from the neighbouring island of taking their land and jobs (BBC:2008). During this period of civil conflict, the Anglican Church of Melanesia (ACOM) found itself in the role of peacemaker. As the largest church in the Solomon Islands, ACOM has since adopted this role formally through the Inclusive Communities Program. Without forgiveness, sorrow and repentance, we cannot have healing. Solomon Islanders have begun to heal their country as peace has held since the program was established. Through their healing, they are establishing deeper relationships with each other and with God.

Sentence

Jesus said: "...I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did."

Reflection

We all thirst for acceptance, reassurance, and relief from the notion that temporal, physical calamities can be seen as judgment of our separation from God. We think we know God at face value through the things that happen and are seen, rather than the depth and maturity of the relationship God requires of us as we seek 'the one who loves us first'.

The desert experience removes us from material comforts and invites us to focus on our inner-selves, to a deeper relationship with God. It creates a longing and a desire to be restored to newness of life.

The Gospel challenges us to choose to seek another chance and to recognise that we need to give others a chance to do the same.

Such challenge invites us to think of a better way for ourselves, in communion with God and for our relationship with the world in which we participate.

We are invited to be released from the captivity of the 'littleness' of what we know on the surface, which can be destructive and misleading.

Jesus knows us deeply; our gifts and our journey and therefore the strength with which we can enter into the urgency of the mission before us.

In relationship with God – our strength is the proportion of God's gift to us.

As we thirst for righteousness and justice, we are seeking God; in our brokenness.

God's wisdom is comfort, assurance and patience, and is the challenge to wrestle with and realise a new and living way that will bear fruit.

We can make the choice.

The choice to live and to have life in abundance, which realises our self potential.

This is the Covenant which is everlasting, and an invitation which will draw others to God and give life to those who thirst; who are victims of our earthly calamities.

Jesus invites us to a deeper relationship with God and one another.

LENT 3

Affirmation

We believe in God who stands with us and offers us the choice to turn again to that which is life giving.

We believe in God the father who is patient and in wisdom helps us to reckon with our brokenness and seek ways to renew our relationship in him.

We believe in God the son, who stands with us in the stories we know and takes us deeper to the truths which lie within.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who helps us to realise our full potential and the strength of the gifts we have been given.

We believe in the Trinity who rejoices with us as we celebrate the abundance of life found as we bear the promise and fruit of God's grace in our repentance, and enter into the joy of renewed mission with him.

Intercessions

Leader: Lord Jesus Christ, as we turn again to you.

Congregation: Lead us to abundant life.

Loving God, as we see a world torn and broken by the cruelty of injustice, hunger, poverty, warfare and terrorism, give us a spirit which makes for peace and bears the fruit of hope and freedom. Give us courage to speak the deeper truths which brings your healing, and turns us again in renewed faith to the abundance of life in you. **LC.**

Loving God, lead us to the springs of living water, and refresh us as we seek to know the gifts we have been given. Help us to listen and to thirst for righteousness as we receive freely your unconditional love. As we journey with you, help us to transform your broken and divided world. Give us courage and strength to seek to correct those things which hurt and inhibit the lives of others, so your world may have abundant life in you. **LC.**

Loving God, as you call us to repent, and to turn again to you, give us open hearts to choose to seek another chance, and to recognise the need to give others a chance too. As the gardener sort to bring new life to the fig tree, help us to seek new ways of realising our potential and the potential in others so that we may grow in your spirit and grace. **LC.**

Loving God, as we find refreshment in your springs of living water and in the mystery of your sacraments, renew us in mission for the peoples of the world who cry out for refreshment and release from all that oppresses. As we are fed by your word, and nourished with bread and wine, give us generous hearts to offer the hospitality of companionship for all those we meet in our journey with you. **LC.**

Response/Action

Choose to meditate and act on the words of the confession in the Eucharist service.

Choose a desert experience which removes a material comfort, and use it to focus on your inner self and relationship with God.

Choose to give what you have gained from this sacrifice by giving to fellow Christians in need.



A Solomon Islander who works in the Inclusive Community Program – helping to keep the peace.

LENT 3 STUDY GROUP QUESTIONS

Jesus said: "No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did."

1. In the light of today's Gospel reading, what does Jesus mean when he says: "...but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did"?
2. In what ways can we prepare ourselves for such repentance?
3. Given we are often confronted with the idea of God's judgment being seen in the light of calamities and natural disasters, how do we offer the world reassurance that suffering is not the result of the sin of people who suffer?
4. Identify those in our community who we might identify as victims of our affluence. How can we begin to identify their needs, and assist in realising their gifts and building their capacity to engage? How might they teach us a new way of seeing the suffering Christ in the world and the hope of transformation?
5. Can we see another way of facing the Jesus we know, that could be life giving for others?
6. As Lent is a time to renew our relationship, understanding and mission with God, can we name and explain the mission and work of those whom we support through ABM?
7. How can we renew our commitment to those who work in the field on behalf of the church and ABM, and build a greater sense of partnership in relationship with one another?