

COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY, 20 March 2022 – LENT 3

COLLECT

Almighty God,
whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain,
and entered not into glory before he was crucified:
mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross,
may find it none other than the way of life and peace;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Psalm 63.1-9

- 1 O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you; ♦
my soul is athirst for you.
- 2 My flesh also faints for you, ♦
as in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.
- 3 So would I gaze upon you in your holy place, ♦
that I might behold your power and your glory.
- 4 Your loving-kindness is better than life itself ♦
and so my lips shall praise you.
- 5 I will bless you as long as I live ♦
and lift up my hands in your name.
- 6 My soul shall be satisfied, as with marrow and fatness, ♦
and my mouth shall praise you with joyful lips,
- 7 When I remember you upon my bed ♦
and meditate on you in the watches of the night.
- 8 For you have been my helper ♦
and under the shadow of your wings will I rejoice.
- 9 My soul clings to you; ♦
your right hand shall hold me fast.

The Prophecy of Isaiah, Chapter 55.1-9

Ho, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and you that have no money,
come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.

² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labour for that which does not satisfy?

Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.

³ Incline your ear, and come to me;
listen, so that you may live.

I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
my steadfast, sure love for David.

⁴ See, I made him a witness to the peoples,
a leader and commander for the peoples.

⁵ See, you shall call nations that you do not know,
and nations that do not know you shall run to you,
because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel,
for he has glorified you.

⁶ Seek the Lord while he may be found,
call upon him while he is near;

⁷ let the wicked forsake their way,
and the unrighteous their thoughts;
let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.

⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

The Gospel according to Luke, Chapter 13, verses 1-9

At that very time there were some present who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ²He asked them, 'Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? ³No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. ⁴Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.'

⁶Then he told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. ⁷So he said to the gardener, "See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?" ⁸He replied, "Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig round it and put manure on it. ⁹If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down." '

Reflection from Peter

As we witness the heart-rending tragedy of elderly people being bombed in their homes and pregnant women losing their own life and their baby we not only feel helpless; we also feel angry; and we feel confused. What have they done to deserve this? Are they somehow worse than other people? This is just the kind of question that some people brought to Jesus. He asks them, "And, because these Galileans suffered in this terrible way, do you think they were somehow worse than other Galileans?" But he goes on to answer his own question: "No, but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did."

Surely we expected more wisdom, more gentleness. Jesus offers no explanation, though he does say it was not that they deserved the treatment they got. Rather, Jesus turns things back to us: the only thing that makes a difference is the care with which we live. We have to work at understanding ourselves and seeing the ways in which we fail to act and speak to the glory of God. Living with complete openness to God – in the way that we see Jesus did – this is the only defence against the terrible things that other people do. Such transparent living helps make us ready for the new world that God is making and to which he invites us through the hope of the Resurrection. And we can dare to do this because we have seen Jesus tread this path before us. He accepted all the injustices, all the evil and cruelty that was thrown at him – and that led him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead and gave him glory; and God longs to give the whole creation new life. As Jesus told his disciples, "I am going to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there you may be also."