

February 28, 2016 Third Sunday of Lent

Isaiah 55: 1, 3a, 6-8, 10-12

*Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come buy milk and wine without money and without price.*

*Incline your ear, and come to me, listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant.*

*Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; 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 God will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.*

*For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven....and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eaters, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and the trees of the field shall clap their hands.*

### *“Time After Time”*

“Each and Every Moment An Opportune Timing for a Second Chance!”

Isaiah 55: 1, 3a, 6-8, 10-12, Mark 13: 1-9, Sirach 4:20, Romans 13:11, 2 Corinthians 6:2

After Isaiah:

Those images...milk and wine...milk, our everyday needs provided, wine...more than our basic needs met, a Passover symbol of belonging... both without price ...priceless...valuable...free to you!

Those next images of seasons within God's care: I am as the cycle of life....in due time all My purposes come to fruition....so concentrate on you ...release yourself from getting entangled in the missteps of others or the false notion you can fix things...anything!

As you release yourself into this moment's possibilities, you will go out in joy into the day and are led...led back in peace.

And...the mountains and hills, will for you, YOU, burst into song and the even the trees will clap as you pass by!

OH MY!!! God loves me! YOU! HO MY!!

So as you listen to this next reading, do so up against this backdrop:

Jesus is trying to get you to release yourself from cause and affect assessments of life... a God who punishes and rewards anyone let alone some more so than others.

Jesus implores us to stop misdirecting our thoughts and energies.

The repent message is an invitation to a... second chance, a new season of growth when we turn around literally! Jesus follows the call to repent with a garden story.

So, hear God as the gardener in the parable Jesus shares....we are the land owners!

And the fig trees are those people and issues and concerns we hold onto and judge in our lives...

Ones that have not quite moved through a complete cycle of care and nurture...in the right timing with enough time...but know, only you (not the gardener) will do the cutting!

this an invitation to give yourself a second chance... all the time!

What time is it? It's time for....

- Time's been good to me
- Running out of time
- Timing
- Time for a change
- Time for a break
- What time do you have Do you have time
- The present time
- Timing is everything
- I'm timing you
- Wrap around time
- Time for a good time
- Tummy time

- Time for a change
- Time is up
- Time is going by
- Time is going slowly
- Time is going quickly
- Now is not the time
- Make time
- Spend time with me
- All the time
- None of the time
- For a long time
- Another time
- A second time
- Time of need
- Just in time
- Time is running

Time after time, all times, every time an acceptable time... for God....let's make that... for you to be saved! Salvation moment to moment: not an end of time, not a one-time happening. A perpetual process! Usually a process of awareness and courage that saves us...from ourselves! We have the power to make this very moment the opportune time! Even the hard moments, especially the hardest moments! Remind yourself your track record for getting through bad days so far is 100%...and that's pretty good!

Lent: Jesus tells us this is the acceptable, opportune time... to bring to an end your old life stopping ways and start choosing more life giving ways of being....and not only for your own good, but for the common good. For it is within what's good for all that we find what is indeed good/best for us!

And in today's wisdom teachings...The gardener in the parable asks the owner to give a second chance to this tree that has not yet produced any fruit. God, the quintessential gardener, is asking us to give life and ourselves and each other a second chance, more time.

The gardener knows things are not right with the tree and that it needs a change of conditions and the right timing...enough time. While God is likened to the gardener, we are like that owner...grumpy for results on our terms, in our timing. The very things that we are tempted to cut off, cut down, stump....may indeed be the very things that can give us life...as our purposes/timing and God's come together! Every fruit begins barren! And like so many of us.....the tree needs a change of conditions. Doesn't your life....need a change of conditions?

This tree needs some room to take root, some wiggle room, some nurture and food in order to flourish...don't you? Doesn't your spirit call out for some space so you can take root in new ways and try on some new ways of being? ...to live differently in the moment, on-going? What do you need to be able to do just this? Most often we leave when we need to find room and sustenance...but the needs go with us! You can't run away from yourself...or God! What is most needed, instead, is to plant yourself right where you are and see your needs for what they really are...from where you are planted. You can learn everything you need to learn right where you are! Believe it! It's why I've been here 18 years. The way you leave one thing is indeed the way you begin the next thing...whether that's church, work, relationship.

We all long for nurture and sustenance because so far life hasn't bloomed for us quite the way we want it to. We want a do over! Don't you...want one, in some part of your life... want a second chance, too? While there is no guarantee the tree will become productive, the gardener wants to do everything possible to help it. And if it's coming down, it won't be the gardener who cuts it down... that be you doing the cutting!

God, it seems, has a green thumb... and we are green thumb believers! God can revive what others count as dead. Tippe Church is living, on-going proof of this! And, so are you! God coaxes us to go beyond the surface level of daily life and let our roots go deep so we can survive the day and turn our lives around, so we can have abundant life. Bloom right where we're planted! God provides water for the thirsty, food that has no price, offers worshipful work for our lives when daily work may bring no satisfaction...If...if you take time, stay in the moment, take time to see from a new perspective.

That's all God asks....come and stay in the moment. Milk the moment to get everything from it that you possibly can! Milk is free to you! God provides....but you are responsible for the life you have. You can cut it out (doing what you've always done). Or, you can cut it down...cut yourself down as only you can. Will you let yourself feel and enjoy God's provision and care, and let it bring you to the next moment? Will you make a break from your old ways? ...with help? Do you see the need to break away? That it's time?

Different timing for each of us! You see, we are still a lot like those who wondered why bad things happen to good people.... in some way, those that perished so violently must be bad, worse than us....right? That's why it was them! We'd like to think that by being "good" we will avoid bad things...as if we have a punish/reward God. And, like them, we still like to think our sins certainly are not as bad as the sins of others. So certainly this talk of sin isn't about us. We'll have a different result than they did! This kind of award and punishment and degrees of badness/sinfulness thinking is a kind of justification or denial... to protect ourselves from old fashioned guilt or from being accountable for our choices.... when actually this way of thinking is more like pushing OURSELVES down the stairs or cutting ourselves down...at the roots... time after time after time!

Suffering and sinning do not have a one on one correlation...cause and effect. Bad stuff happens. Everyone sins....turn away! There are parts of our lives that we don't seem to want to grow. Places where we are stuck in time, in harsh realities.... Suffering happens. And it is not what God wants! For me, suffering offers a connection to compassion rather than to sinfulness. It's an opportunity....to join my suffering with the suffering of the world and tap...root tap... into holy compassion...it can get me through! No matter how good you are trying to be or how good things have gone for you so far, there may be suffering...it's not the point, not a marker of any kind other than sadness!

No...we all at times are called to repent: grow, turn around, live anew in the moment. Conversely, just because something terrible happens to you or happens somewhere else to someone else... even as/if you struggle... not understanding the "why", the cause of such suffering, this rational approach to non-rational life is not an excuse to stop believing God cares and is present .... in ways that may not be apparent.... working underground, beneath the feet on which you stand....in mysterious ways as your timing and God's timing come together.

Know: the peace and wholeness you long for may not come to fruition in your preferred timing! Like that fig tree! Don't let suffering or confusion be an excuse not to do what you know you are to do: repent, grow...step up to life, live! ...time after time.

Turn your life around. Look at it from a new perspective. The world may operate on a system of rewards and punishments. God does not! God loves the sinner and God loves the goody two shoes as well...you know, that's the one who does all the right stuff on the outside but yet so often, as we know.... inside may be empty or broken or cursing under their breath, or manipulating for a certain result out of fear, rushing into the moment or avoiding it completely. God knows...

You see there is no hierarchy of love or sins. Now is then and then is now. Now of course, murdering someone vs telling a lie are in two different categories, but don't let yourself off the hook too easily because both do damage. It is not our place to judge the sinfulness of others, rather we are to use good judgment ourselves. Thank God, God's ways are not our ways! And, we don't have to be little Gods with it all figured out. Our work is not to figure out what we don't understand, but live into what we do understand. This is a lifetime's worth of work!

Sin doesn't have much to do with being naughty.... sin has much more to do with ignoring or suppressing the spirit within that is telling us we are avoiding some fundamental realities.... often for really good reasons.... but.... we are not going to have our life really together until we sort this out. Until we face up to it and deal with it....with help ...for we belong to one of the last covenant communities whose whole intention is to....be of help, service to our God and each other!

~~~

Gee, I wonder...how would someone know if they are sinning? ...you know, beyond the obvious "wrongs"? Is it when we feel "guilt" or "edgy" or "uncomfortable" about something? These internal responses may mean there is unfinished business, or you've taken on something that is not yours (spirit), or you have not been fully honest with yourself or another... and you're in that moment of: self-awareness... lack of self-awareness.... perhaps a sin...because it diminishes YOU and sets you apart...alone! God summons us to repent...to take

the time to live differently....not to humiliate or punish us, but so we can come closer to the kind of life we long to have. Every moment closer to the heart of God! To repent, you have to be self-aware.

Week 1. And, you must let your heart be courageous.

Week 2 And now it's time to boldly take...a second chance! God gives second chances! A Do Over, Green Thumb God! God is whispering deep inside you, "There is something wrong here. Don't just keep avoiding it. Deal with it....it's time...I am with you." You know when you have sinned or are being tempted to sin...so, right them... stop and feel the gardener with you! Act on that awareness. Take courage and turn away, turn toward what has integrity and is life giving and freedom making!

It's time for a second, a new chance! I know you know what you are called to do! Seek the help to do it! For you belong! You do! Supporting YOU! That's part of what I'm here for... and you too... here to help each other... be of that one holy breath together... step up together in belonging as a covenant, worshiping community! It's perfect timing! Listen: Jesus never makes anyone feel guilty. He never is judgmental. He names things the way they are and invites people to focus inward and claim the outward life God is offering. He offers people, in the name of God, a second chance! Take the time to take a chance on yourself and each other!

He...Jesus, God, Sophia, Spirit.... goes with you ...with you.... energizing each moment as you take advantage of the second chances possible within you... not because you are so good or so bad.... but because God is so merciful and gracious and loves you that much. And it's time...a season for change. Look over your life.

~How has God been turning over the soil to loosen your tangled roots?

~How is God watering and feeding you?

~Are you seeing or sensing any new possibilities for how life can be?

~How have the hard things that have happened to you, you know... those times when you've been covered with manure! ...how have they enriched you and turned you around?

You did let them, turn you around....right? During the moments we feel close to God, when we feel God is near, this is exactly when we can lean into new courage and wisdom and reattach our roots to a new way of being. God does not leave you hollow, empty, a cut off stump. God fills you up, grows you up, and never gives you up! Acknowledge your self-awareness and courageous love and the second chance offered.... All you have to do is see this is indeed the opportune time.

It's time...

time at long last to open your perspective, your point of view, see your patterns, your resistance ...and seize the moment...fully aware, living from your courageous heart.

Time after time...