

Homily for Sunday Mass  
March 23, 2019  
Year C 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent  
Luke 13:1-9  
----Father Michael Grant George Cadotte----

So where was God? Where was God when he allowed Pilate to kill the Galileans? Where was God when the tower of Siloam [Sigh-low-um] fell whipping out 18 people. Where was God on March 15<sup>th</sup> of this month when evil, full of sin and disgust for the Creator's beautiful people, entered two different mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand and killed 50 people of faith and wounded 50 more? Where was God? Where IS God?

Well, God was there 2,000 years ago right along the side of his Galilean children and God was in Siloam with the 18 and God most certainly was with the 100s murdered, wounded, and terrorized in Christchurch. The real and definitive fact is that God is always with us, among us, watching over us. Death, natural or otherwise, is not some sort of punishment dolled out by some vengeful deity like a demonic puppet master. And death is not some sort of punishment for current or past sins. God does not work this way. Do any of you truly feel like any of those mentioned deserved to die, or that you are not worthy to live? Jesus said, "...by no means!" (LK 13:3). We all owe a death at some point but what Jesus is trying to tell us is to live in our faith, live in Jesus, 'repent,' so you will not perish but live with Jesus in eternal life.

Evil is at an increasing level of work in the world today and some, for many reasons I am sure, cannot or will not accept that fact. Our Gospel reading today can give some comfort knowing that Jesus is there to give you the Word, to give you himself, for your personal salvation. Jesus, God, is always alongside of you – you are never alone even when evil is at your door.

What, then, does that mean when life turns chaotic and all you want to do is cry out and give in? Go back to today's scripture and read the parable of the gardener.

We have an orchard with many trees and one rather slothy fig tree. This darn tree will just not work. Year after year it produces no fruit -just worthless! The owner of the orchard decides to cut the pest down but the gardener intervenes, begs for our little barren tree's life asking, "Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future" (LK 13:9).

Our lives are like this orchard my friends. We have many trees that make up our life and some bear much fruit and we can live off them while others do not and are like the fig tree in need of our attention. But without the little fig tree in our example of life we are not fully whole, we are not us. We are a collection of what worked, what works, what has failed, and what may not be. It is, to say the least for many of us, a real mess, but IT IS US...YOU. Embrace who you authentically are in your inner-orchard my loved ones and know you are just as your Creator wants you to be. Without all our trees in our garden, our orchard of life is not fully realized or complete. Jesus came to bring full life

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to our lives but efforts on our part must be made to fulfill this heavenly desire. And NO, we are not living in a Job Equation where all suffering is from sin. God has loved you from the moment you were created and God continues to love each and every one of you to this day, and beyond. So, deal with it.

Now, moving away from all those things that make us a whole and looking at each of us as part of a greater whole we then can see God's perspective of working to save one little tree in a garden of so many. Just one more chance, just a little more effort, a little more care on my part and that tree will flourish says the gardener. You know, don't you, that the gardener is Jesus and he will always be there to help you flourish and grow.

Want more proof? Look to the 15<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Luke where Jesus tells the parable of the lost sheep. The shepherd goes looking for the 1 lost little sheep leaving the 99 others he owns behind. In our numbers and value-based world would we not cut our losses at 99%? Jesus said, "I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance" (LK 15:7). The heavenly value system is not of our world. The one lost is worth so much to God – we are worth so much to God and don't you ever question that or forget that.

So, we continue forward to better ourselves knowing that our great Advocate is along side us and has not / will not give up on us.

In relation to other people, we look for the good in them, and deal with them with acceptance, trust, affection and care. In relation to God we treat God as our origin, the ultimate source of our existence. (Brian Gleeson, Volume2 Digest, V60, N4)

It is a very personal thing in our faith knowing that we have the intimate connection with our Creator. Knowing that our Creator loves us beyond measure and judges us not. Knowing that when we judge ourselves our Creator is there to say 'give it a little more time.' And time it surely can take.

John Newton found his ship in a great storm and for six hours the captain battled the elements and was sure that all hands would be lost. John turned back to God in that moment, after some time walking away from the Lord, and asked for help. This was the beginning of a six-year path of repentance until John finally walked away from the slave trade and truly freed himself from his sins. You can sing about this conversion of heart in the song he penned "Amazing Grace." God saw some good in John and did not give up on him even when he gave up on God and his own humanity and that of so many others. If God can deliver John, you best bet he can deliver you too!

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This Sunday we learn that our living is enriched and brought to blossom and fruition by sharing in the work and message of this God/Man. He is the beloved Son: let's listen to the events and moments of our inner life. Let's consider the happenings and events in the world according to the ministry, preaching, and events in the life of Jesus. Let us look on the events of Holy Week as the difficulty we will encounter as we live a life of love of others. It leads to a cross that is not the final act in the drama of our life. It is the Resurrection and the full flowering and bearing of fruit that is the final purpose and meaning of human life. It is the future of all creation! That is the Amazing Grace we are called to sing through-out our living. (Keller, Volume2 Digest, V60, N4)

AMEN